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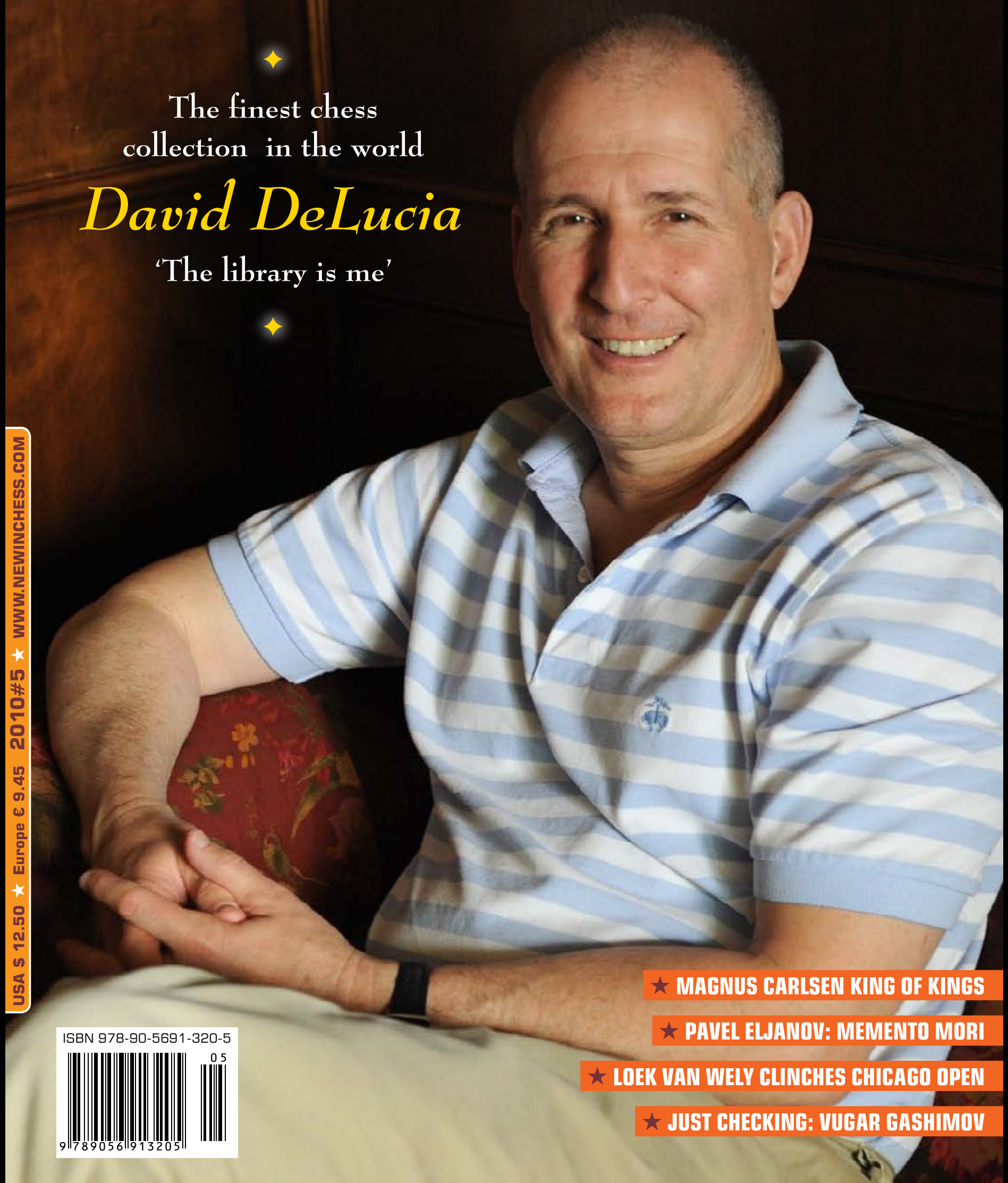

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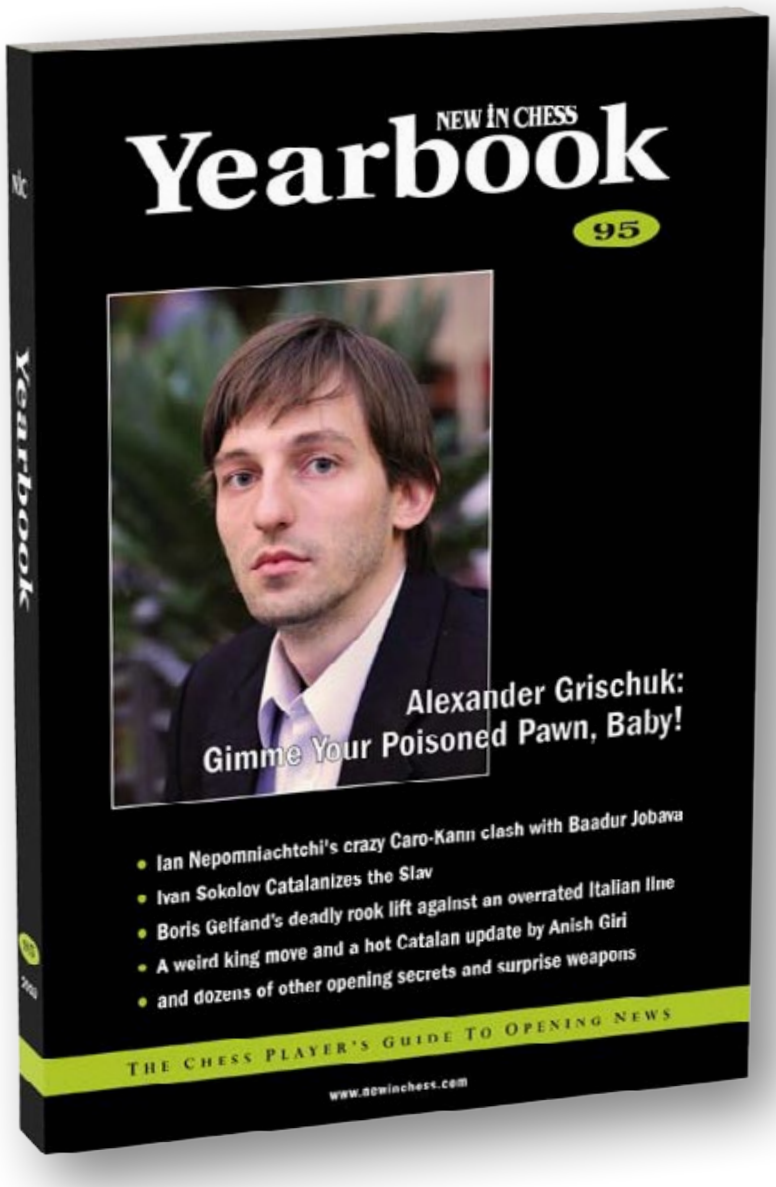
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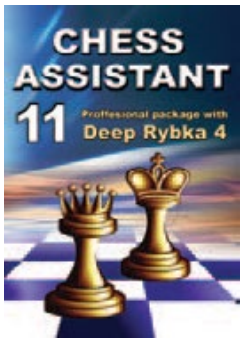

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2010 Issue 5

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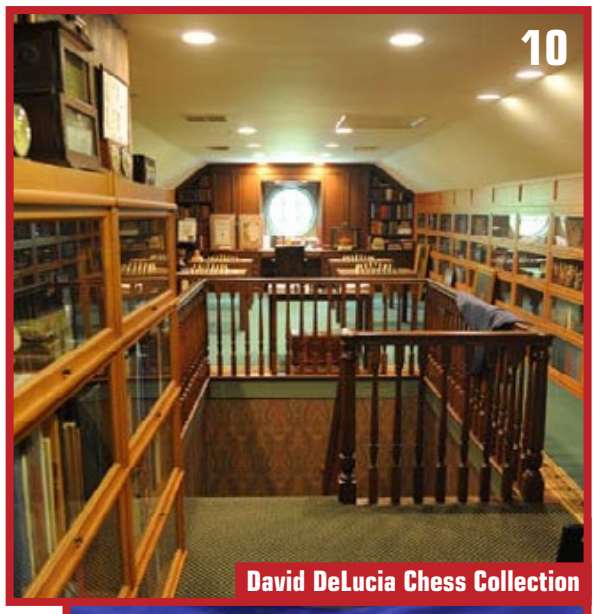

6 NIC's Café

10 The Finest Chess Collection in the World
Immaculate copies of the rarest books, countless classics signed by the authors, a 15th-century Lucena manuscript, score-sheets ranging from Fischer's Game of the Century against Donald Byrne to all the games of the 1927 New York tournament, letters by Morphy, Capablanca's golden pocket watch, the contract of the 1886 Steinitz-Zukertort world championship match... There is no end to the treasures of the David DeLucia chess library. Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam couldn't believe his good fortune when he was received as the 6th visitor to this exquisite collection.

22 Carlsen King of the Kings
With yet another historical performance (7½ out of 10 and a performance rating of 2918), Magnus Carlsen confirmed his status of absolute favourite at the Kings' Tournament in Romania. In the process the Norwegian world number one raised his Elo to 2826, the second highest rating ever, 25 points shy of Garry Kasparov's all-time high.

44 Worth the Wait
In 1991 sixteen-year-old wunderkind Gata Kamsky won the U.S. Championship. He, like many observers, must have expected it would be the first of many U.S. titles. In fact he had to wait for nineteen years. At the 2010 U.S. Championship in St. Louis, at the cusp of thirty-six, Kamsky finally made it back to the winner's circle. Joel Benjamin reports.

60 Memento Mori
After months of pessimism and uncertainty the concluding stage of the 2008/09 FIDE Grand Prix finally took place in Astrakhan. Pavel Eljanov relates how the GP helped him overcome a serious form crisis and gave him the opportunity to score one of the finest victories in his young career – a victory that cemented his status as a new member of the world's top-10 with a 2755 rating.

70 Vanquishing Vikings
In the past twelve months Anish Giri collected an incredible 154 Elo points that took the 16-year-old to an imposing 2672 rating. Fourteen of those points the young Dutchman gathered at the Sigeman Tournament in Malmö. In an exclusive report Giri proves once again that he is not only a wonderful player, but also an insightful and witty commentator.

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(Not) Havana Good Time 90
Nigel Short had always wished to play in the Capablanca Memorial, perhaps the most venerable traditional tournament in Latin-America. When the Englishman finally made it to Havana for the 45th edition, everyday reality in the Caribbean socialist paradise sadly differed from what he had hoped to find.

Tourist Turns Winner 96
For more than a year now, Loek van Wely has kept us posted about his adventures on the U.S. chess circuit. Imagine our (and his) delight when minutes after the last round of the Chicago Open we received a text message saying that this time he'd report from the winner's perspective.

Battling till the End 102
Last year the Icelandic film *Me and Bobby Fischer*, directed by Fridrik Gudmundsson, came out on DVD. Hans Ree enjoyed the 'extra exclusive bonus material', which has Fischer talking for 83 minutes, longer than the film itself.

Sharp Games from Siberia 106
Jan Timmen signals a new trend in events where the Sofia rules are applied and shows spectacular chess from the Karpov tournament in Poikovsky.

Just Checking 114
Any idea what Vugar Gashimov believes to be the best chess country in the world?

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Joel Benjamin, Jeroen Bosch, Magnus Carlsen, Pavel Eljanov, Vugar Gashimov, Boris Gelfand, Anish Giri, Teimour Radjabov, Hans Ree, Nigel Short, Jan Timman, Loek van Wely

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
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COVER PHOTO
David DeLucia: New In Chess

We Want Democracy!

The electoral campaigns for the FIDE presidency continue to fascinate and perturb us. There is a lot at stake and both the sides of the incumbent, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, and the challenger, Anatoly Karpov, are pulling out all the stops to boost the chances of their candidates. One of our favourites remains Ali Nihat Yazici, president of the Turkish Chess Federation and perhaps the staunchest Ilyumzhinov supporter on the planet. His language may not always be subtle or diplomatic, but that only adds clarity as to which side he is on. One of Ilyumzhinov's campaign promises is that he will defend the one-country-one-vote policy in FIDE. At the elections in Khanty-Mansiysk the vote of the United States will carry the same weight as Zambia's. And why would we change that? Mr. Nihat Yazici fully sides with Mr. Ilyumzhinov. As he phrased it in one of his many recent open letters: 'Gens una sumus means: "we are one family!" This family – FIDE – does have small, big, weak, strong, poor, rich members. All they are equal for us! We want democracy! We hate Oligarchy and Plutocracy!'

Hear, hear. Now an easy rule-of-thumb these days is to be on your guard when people carry on too much about democracy (or respect, another word that has gone down the drain) and this seems to be another case in point. Is it such a good idea that all member countries of FIDE have one vote? Wouldn't it be fairer if a leading chess nation such as, say, Germany, with close to a hundred thousand members, had more votes than a small country with 50 members? We think that for the development of chess this would be preferable, but we also understand Ilyumzhinov's point. As his predecessor, the late Florencio Campomanes, taught him, the one-country-one-vote rule is a mighty tool. Campomanes has been rightly praised for the great number of new countries that joined FIDE during his reign. However, there was also a clear drawback to his collecting frenzy. Thanks to the many small and developing countries that he brought into FIDE, Campomanes comfortably maintained his power, as these countries could be bribed more easily with boxes of chess clocks or sets, airplane tickets or relatively small amounts of money. How well

Elista '96. Those were the days. When Ilyumzhinov and Karpov sat at one table and it was the latter who appeared to have the extraterrestrial connections.

Ilyumzhinov had learned this lesson, he demonstrated at the elections in Turin, when his men went around openly to buy votes.

We must confess that we have eagerly perused the list of countries that, according to Ilyumzhinov's campaign site *One World One Vision*, have so far stated that they will vote for him at the elections this September. At the top of the alphabetical list is that benchmark of democracy Afghanistan. Scrolling down you will find model democracies such as Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Myanmar, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Yemen.

Remember Russia

Also on the list is Russia. But didn't the Russian Chess Federation vote in favour of Karpov when their Supervisory Council met in Moscow on May 14th? Yes they did and there was a quorum. So what happened? Their choice was not appreciated by the President of the Council, Arkady Dvorkovich, who is an aide to Russia's President Medvedev. Shortly after that meeting Dvorkovich ordered a private security firm to seize the offices of the chess federation at the Central Chess Club, and on June 28th he sent FIDE a letter saying that following a meeting of the Supervisory board of the Russian Chess Federation, they had chosen to nominate Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. The group of Council members that attended that second meeting out of necessity also included members that had been at the meeting that had been totally in favour of Karpov's candidacy. Yet this didn't affect the result. All members present at the second meeting, without a single exception, voted for Ilyumzhinov. Unfortunately, this 100 per cent score was not enough to break the old record set in Albania, years ago, when at the time of the Communist regime several proposals were accepted by 110 per cent of the voters.

Timely and Satisfactory

As for the Ilyumzhinov campaign, we must not forget to mention (if only for the record so as to be able to bring them up again after he has long forgotten them himself) his customary promises of multi-figure sums to be spent in the future, e.g. a million dollars for a Campomanes Memorial tournament series in Asia or $500,000 for two new tournaments announced when he visited Cuba. But let's have a look at the other side of the fence as well, as Anatoly Karpov has not been idle either. To begin with, he has been busy campaigning in numerous countries (several times in the company of his old rival Garry Kasparov). A further intriguing step of the Karpov2010 team was to request, after submitting all nominating documents to the FIDE Secretariat, to see all the documents of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's ticket. In their view, making all these documents on both sides public is one way to mitigate the obvious conflict of interest created when Ilyumzhinov's team is in charge of examining and approving these important papers. Additionally, they claimed that there were multiple irregularities and falsehoods in the statements published on Ilyumzhinov's campaign site that needed to be addressed. When this request was refused, they took a more remarkable step: they enlisted the help of the international law firm White & Case. After investigating the available evidence, their attorneys pointed out many discrepancies and contradictions illustrating the conflict of interest and consequent abuse of FIDE powers already present in the campaign. In their letter they ask FIDE to clarify a long list of matters, including the conflicting votes in Russia, and to provide evidence to support their claims in these and other matters. The letter concludes that 'in the absence of a timely and satisfactory response, our client may be forced to undertake further steps, including legal action.' As it is hard to imagine that FIDE will come up with a timely and satisfactory response to the questions in this letter, it will be interesting to see what the next step of Karpov's team is going to be.

One More Resting Place

As you can read in Hans Ree's column, Bobby Fischer's grave was briefly 'opened' on July 5th to obtain a tissue sample in order to compare the American's DNA with that of his alleged daughter. The cemetery in Laugardalur is not the only resting place that Fischer pilgrims may want to visit on a tour of Iceland. They may also want to make a trip to Skorradalur Valley, an impressive piece of wild nature at an hour's drive from Reykjavik. Here Einar Einarsson, chairman of the RJF committee that was active to free Fischer from a Japanese jail and get him to Iceland, has erected a small monument for his deceased friend. On an August day in 2005, Fischer and Einarsson went for a walk in this area, when the former World Champion, who tired quickly, looked around and said, 'Where are all the benches,

The moss-covered rock on which Fischer slept like a log.

Einar?' There were no benches, so Einarsson suggested that he lie down on a large rock covered with moss instead. Fischer slept like a log on the rock and now Einarsson has erected a sign next to the rock, which he calls 'Bobby's Bench'. The sign also has an Icelandic proverb: 'Twice rested is he who sits himself on a stone.'

COLOPHON

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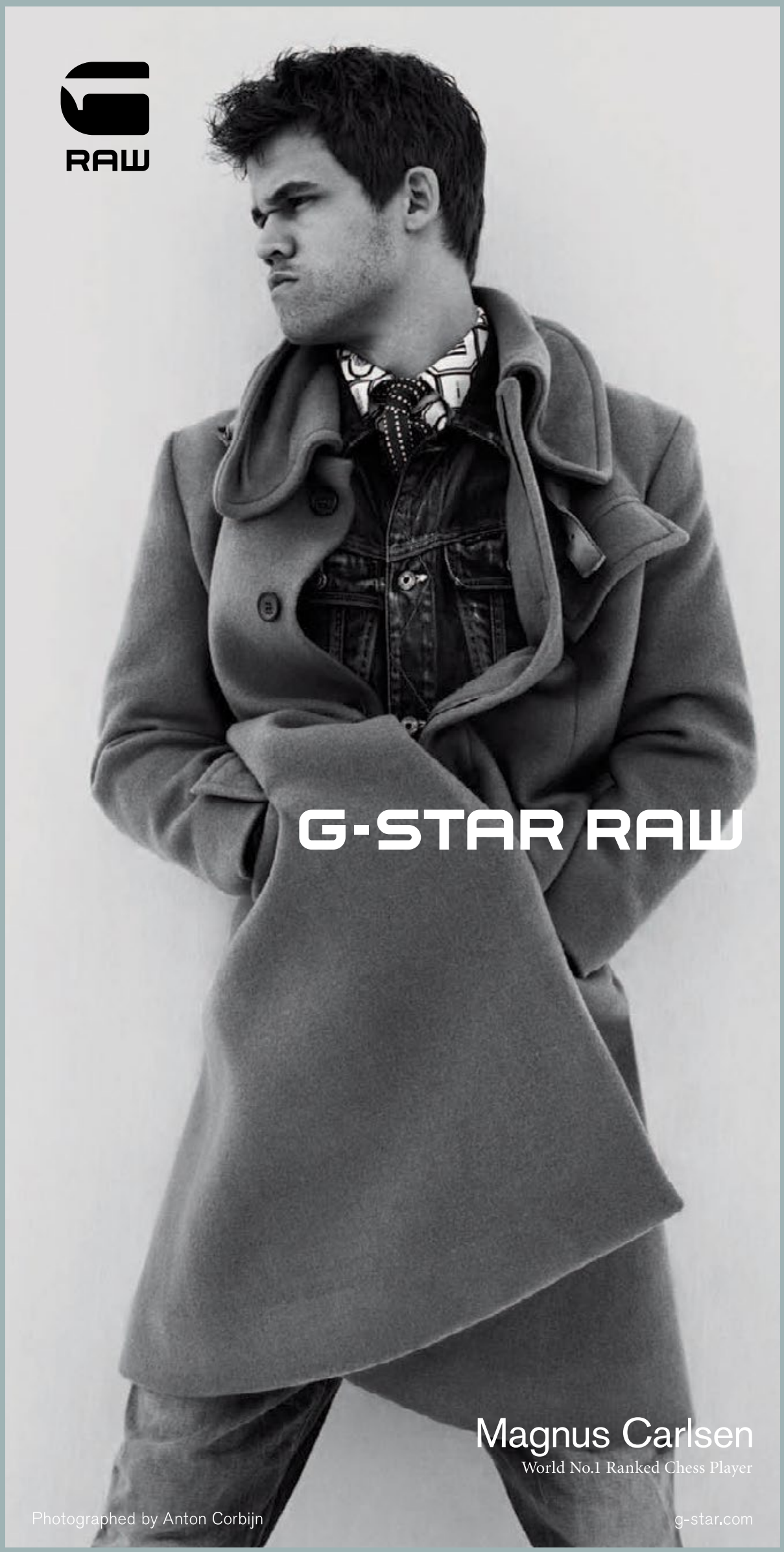
CARLSEN MEETS CORBIJN

When he burst onto the scene like a prodigious 'wonderboy', Magnus Carlsen was soon seen by many as the saviour of chess. This was what our game needed to become a global attraction with news value from New York to Moscow: a brilliant chess player from a Western country who was not only intelligent, but athletic and quick-witted to boot. The Norwegian youngster kept his promise, and he raced to the summit of the chess Olympus at the speed of sound. On January 1st of this year he became the number one in the world. His current rating is 2826, and no one doubts that before long he will break Garry Kasparov's all-time high of 2851. For kids around the world Carlsen is a role model. And now he's also a fashion model, showing another groundbreaking side of his potential. At a press conference in Berlin, G-Star, the highly fashionable jean-oriented brand announced their alliance with the Norwegian ace. The photos were shot at a session in the U.S. by star photographer Anton Corbijn of U2 fame and the maker of countless iconic photos of the famous and fabled. Let's see where Magnus Carlsen will go and where he will take chess.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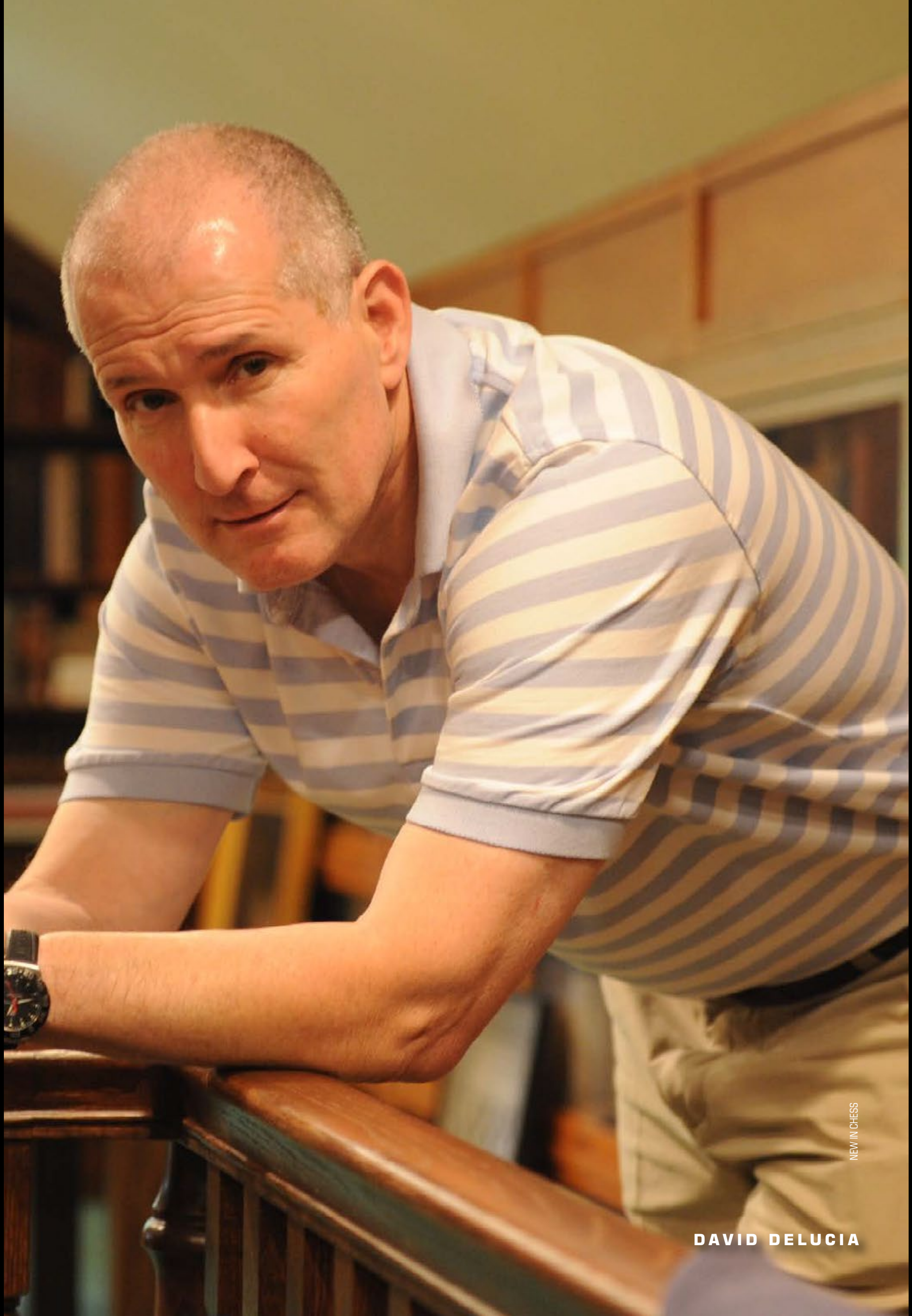
David DeLucia

‘A great collection should be what you really love’

The finest copies of the rarest books, countless classics signed by the authors, a 15th-century Lucena manuscript, score-sheets ranging from Fischer’s Game of the Century against Donald Byrne to all the games of the 1927 New York tournament, eight letters by Morphy, over a hundred Lasker manuscripts, Capablanca’s golden pocket watch, the contract of the 1886 Steinitz-Zukertort world championship match... There is no end to the treasures in David DeLucia’s chess library, arguably the finest chess collection in the world. An exquisite collection and a very private place, the inner sanctum of the collector, where he looks for peace and quiet and barely allows visitors. Thanks to his catalogue and two lavish photo books his fellow-collectors know the magnificence of the DeLucia library, but only very few have actually seen it. Family members and a few close friends apart, so far only five(!) people had the privilege. Small wonder that **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** couldn’t believe his good fortune when he was received as the 6th visitor.


DAVID DELUCIA
NEW IN CHESS

When you walk into David DeLucia's library, you enter a haven of order and clarity. No matter where you look, you will not see the stacks of books or random piles of paper that seem to be the fate of any grand-scale collector. All books are neatly lined up on shelves, protected against dust behind glass. For their further well-being the temperature and the humidity in the L-shaped 1000-square-foot room are controlled. Thousands of chess books, from a first edition of Damiano (1612) to the personal (and signed) copy of Bobby Fischer of his *My 60 Memorable Games*, form the core of the library. However, the fame of the collection is in no small part due to a tremendous number of manuscripts, autographs, and what DeLucia calls 'ephemera': memorabilia of the great champions, such as Morphy's chess board, Capablanca's top hat or Fischer's childhood accordion. The letters, manuscripts and score-sheets are kept in folders, which in their turn are kept in custom-made archive boxes that fill many a shelve in the cupboards next to his desk. The ephemera sit mostly next to or between books that are exhibited with their special or decorative covers turned to the viewer. Some of the exhibits sit on top of the bookcases amid items that have nothing to do with chess, such as family photos or etchings by Rembrandt or Dürer.

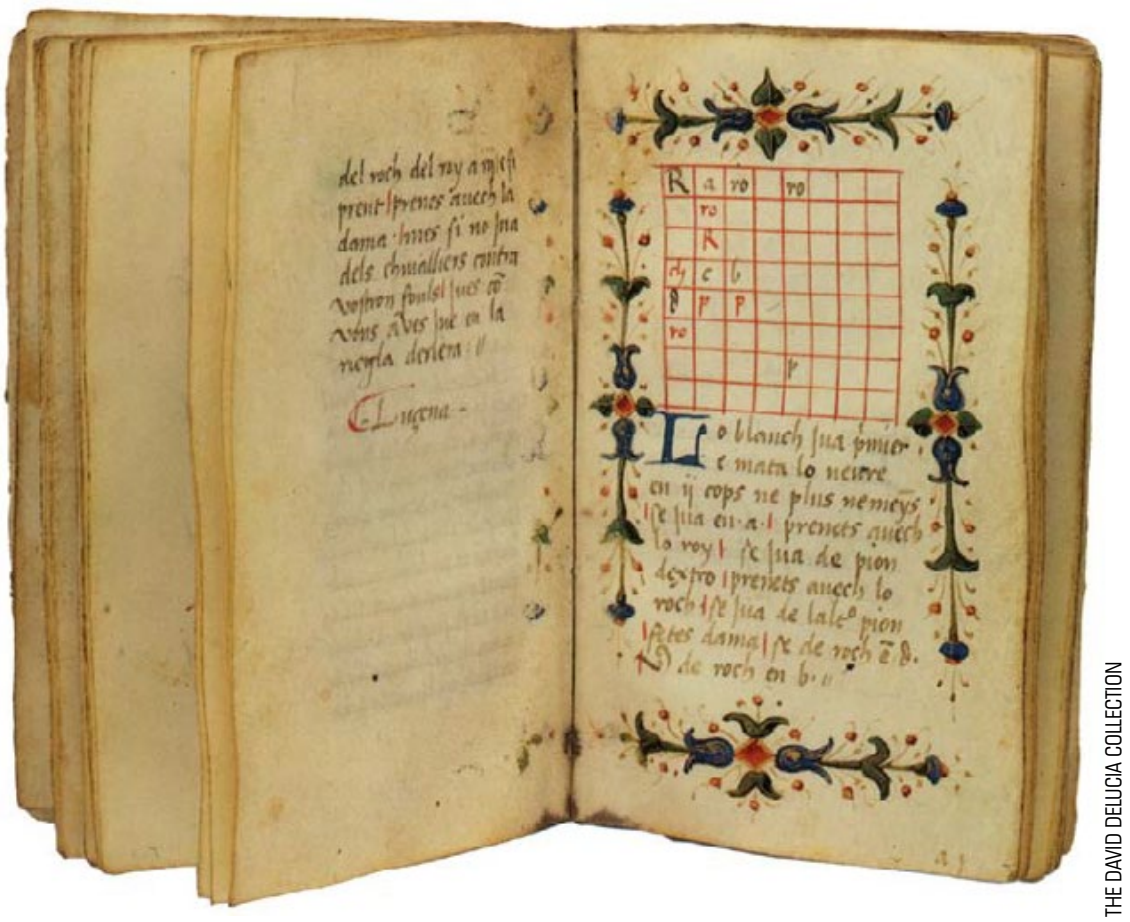
Amid the non-chess items a framed one-dollar note catches the eye. David DeLucia tells me that his father gave it to him when he was a young man and wrote on it: May you never be broke. 'We came from a poor family, so he probably wanted to say, I hope you be successful. My father was a gambler and unfortunately, as it goes with gamblers, they never seem to have any money and are always looking forward to the next big win, which never comes. He was a very hard-working man, a fisherman and a beautician, a hairdresser, kind of a strange combination. Unfortunately a lot of the money that he made was just squandered.'

David DeLucia spent his working life on Wall Street, never forgetting his childhood years. Although he worked with money, he didn't feel like a gambler. 'In the position I was in, I was much more the casino than the gambler. There's a huge difference between the guy on that side and the gambler. Even though it's gambling, when you have the odds in your favour it's a little bit different. My business was investing in securities. My responsibility was investing first capital over three firms and roughly 25 years.' In those years he worked for Salomon Brothers, which he joined in 1976, Goldman Sachs and Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette. In 2000, when the latter firm was taken over by rivals Credit Suisse First Boston for $11.5bn, he left and retired. His father need not have worried, he was never broke. According to the financial press, DeLucia 'made a serious fortune on Wall Street'.

His passion for collecting was ignited when he was working for Salomon Brothers in London and a colleague sitting next to him gave him a piece of advice. 'I guess you couldn't have two more opposite people. One a refined blueblood, the other a kid that grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, with no money. He was a very wealthy and well-bred guy. This was a guy who used to spend his summers at Blenheim Palace (the birthplace of Winston Churchill in Oxfordshire, UK – DJtG) and the Churchills would come over here. He went to school with Harry Oppenheimer's son, the diamond guy, and married Henry Ford's niece. It always annoyed him that his mother had given a Gutenberg Bible to Yale University and not to him! He had a magnificent home. Your home should be your castle and that's where it should be shown. Nowhere else. I loved that philosophy. I still drive my Toyota Camry, I still dress down, that's what I like. This guy was an avid fine arts collector, and he said, you should start collecting something. I was pretty green, before I went to London I had never been abroad. He said, what do you like doing? And I said, I like playing chess. Chess was always a part of my life, although I was never that good at it. I think the highest my rating ever got was 2240 or 2250. And he said, well, start collecting chess.'

The start was modest. In 1985 DeLucia bought five or six books at the Ford chess auction at Sotheby's and one year later he acquired 'some good books' at the Michael Macdonald-Ross sale. But all in all he found that rare books were indeed rare. After his return to the U.S. he visited the New York Antiquarian Book Fair in the spring of 1988, asking dealers if they had any chess books. The golden tip came from a dealer from California, who told him that there was a big collection on the market, the Hennessey collection. Reginald Hennessey had died some years earlier and his widow was looking to sell it. Several collectors, including Lothar Schmid, had already been in touch with her, trying to buy certain items but her husband Reg, as everyone called him, had given her the instruction not to sell it piecemeal. He had also told her to ask $100,000 for the collection, a price she herself was to lower to $85,000. After DeLucia had found her telephone number she kindly invited him to come to the West Coast and allowed him to inspect the collection for three days. Comparing Hennessey's library to his catalogues and pricelists he soon came to the conclusion that 600 of the books alone were

worth $85,000 if he would have to buy them individually from dealers. As the total number of books was about three thousand, there was no reason to hesitate. 'It just turned out to be a remarkable collection. He had a first edition Ruy Lopez, 1561, a Gianutio 1597, he had a beautiful Carrera, 1617. He loved Philidor and was very proud that he had over a hundred editions. Of course the 1749 French first edition, and the 1754 first edition in German, the first Dutch, first English, all of them. He had a Cozio, he had a number of manuscripts, maybe about 20 or 30 of them, some of them done by pretty good people. A whole set of periodicals. An almost complete run of *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, a complete run of *BCM*, Steinitz's *International Chess Magazine*. It didn't suit most collectors because they would already have had a lot. For me it was a perfect fit, as I had virtually nothing of that kind. I was also fortunate that she was in the art book publishing business and she wrapped them all up and sent them to me. I lived in a small two-bedroom in New York City and the whole living room was filled with boxes, floor to ceiling. Every night I'd take a box and go to the other room and open it. It was like Christmas for six months. That was the start of it.'



THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

An early 16th century Lucena manuscript written on vellum. David DeLucia bought it at the Muffang auction in Paris in 1991, where he also acquired a first edition Damiano.

The Hennessey collection was the first, but certainly not the last library he bought. For an ambitious collector there simply is no other route. At auctions you may fill gaps in your collection by bidding on individual books, but if you want to pick up speed and really expand in certain areas, the best strategy is to buy the complete collection of someone who has specialized in such an area. Sometimes these acquisitions come about in unexpected, even hilarious ways. 'One day there was a guy in Massachusetts at an auction, he had a number of Morphy items, among them Morphy's cane, and the first edition of Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games*, signed. And every time I am bidding on a good item, there's someone else bidding against me. And I am only winning about half of them. I am thinking, gee, who can this guy be? Two or three days later I get a call from Sam Ennis from Madison, Wisconsin. Fred Wilson, the book dealer in New York, always thought that Sam had the finest 19th century Americana chess collection in the world. Sam was an avid collector, but he was always between collecting and not having any money. He was proud to say that about 70 to 80 per cent of his disposable income went to buying chess books. So he calls me up to ask me if I was the other guy at the auction and tells me that after buying all this stuff he is broke. I said, you bid all this stuff up and now you're broke?! Then he said, I'd like you to do me a favour. What? I'd like to see it for about a week and then would you buy it from me? And I said OK, although it now cost me several thousand dollars extra. He saw it for a week and then I went there and bought the lot. He lived in a trailer, somewhere in the middle of the country. I'll never forget the day I visited him. It was like going into the heart of darkness, you know, in the middle of Africa. It must have been 100 degrees, if not 120 in the trailer, total humidity, 99 per cent humidity and I am allergic to cats and he had all these cats. And then he smoked. I think it took about 10 years for his stuff to lose its smell. I aired it out and gave it a lot of space to breathe. It was probably the only collection that I had grossly overpaid for, but I didn't mind. Sam was a good man, one of those guys that if he gave you his

word on something you could take it to the bank. He had some great stuff, like a bound copy of Steinitz's *International Chess Magazine* inscribed by Steinitz, which is rare.'

At first he mainly collected books, until Jeff Kramer, the chess book dealer from Whitehall, Pennsylvania, convinced him that he should focus on autographs, too. Kramer loved autographs, even more than books, and thanks to his connections in American chess circles he had amassed an imposing collection. In the end DeLucia bought his Lasker collection, which consisted of 100 manuscripts, 900 letters, 75 postcards and numerous signed books and honorary diplomas presented to Lasker. Many more autographs of a multitude of players were acquired when DeLucia bought what he calls 'a beautiful collection' from Hanon Russell.

What he does pride himself on is that he was ahead of his time in looking for what he calls 'ephemera'. Few if any collectors were interested in personal belongings of the great players, whereas he always loved them. But then he is talking about Fischer's chess clock or Capablanca's chess board, not just anything. 'You shouldn't get obsessed with it. I had the opportunity to buy a lot of Capablanca's clothes, and Fischer's clothes. I wanted none of that. The only thing I would have bought of Fischer's, if it had been there, was one of those flannel shirts he had as a boy, I loved those. But you have to draw a line somewhere.'

Jeff Kramer also receives credit for pushing him into a clear direction. 'One day he said to me, you should really, if nothing else, collect the champions. And I started thinking about it and thought, gee, I always liked Morphy, going over his games. I liked Lasker. I loved Capa and Alekhine. And Fischer.' Once he knew that this was the right course, he proceeded with determination, although he does not stop stressing that being lucky and being in the right place at the right moment are essential components of a collector's success. He knew that Dale Brandreth had many Morphy items, as he had bought the collection of David Lawson, the author of the definitive Morphy biography. Now DeLucia doesn't only have the manuscript and typescript of *Paul Morphy, The Pride and Sorrow of Chess*, he also has (among many other things) an inscribed photo of Morphy from 1859 by Civil War photographer Mathew Brady and the first chess board of the American legend. 'I vividly remember going down to Dale Brandreth to buy it. He was always afraid to offer it because it was in glass and he thought if he had to ship it, it might be damaged.'

He also owns a great variety of Capablanca items. Roman Dzindzichashvili, who once was his chess teacher, introduced him to Olga Capablanca. She sold him various things and after her death he remained in touch with her last husband, who sold him a last batch three months ago, which included the original portrait of Capablanca by the Cuban artist Valderrama, records of his lectures, his wallet, a lot of signed books and more. A lot of his Fischeriana he obtained through Pal Benko, who was a close friend of Fischer's and let him sign many books and photographs. 'I always was a huge Fischer fan and have collected his stuff for the past 25 years. And things keep coming up for auction and I try to buy them.'

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

Capablanca's golden pocket watch.

Still, he didn't buy anything at the auction at Bonham's last year where St. Louis chess benefactor Rex Sinquefield bought a collection of Fischer books for a steep price. DeLucia says he didn't do so for two reasons. 'I went to the New York auction and I spent more time than anybody looking at that stuff. I can tell you there were probably half a dozen or a dozen signed books, and hundreds of unsigned ones. Well, I mean, if I was a dishonest person, I could take 12 of my books up here signed by Bobby, and especially with what I have up there, take a thousand books that have nothing to do with Bobby, put them all together and say listen this was Bobby's. And that's what's happened here.' Apart from that he thinks the amount that was fetched was ridiculous. 'This is exactly what I don't like about collecting, when a guy can go in and make a big splash, spend $50,000, and after commission $64,000 and buy virtually nothing of any provenance of Bobby Fischer.'

It's something he stresses more than once in the two days that I visit him. He is in the position to buy virtually everything, but whenever a book is offered he wants to follow his own rules, which are dictated by reason and by a sense of reality.

Still, he happily admits that sometimes he regrets this 'realistic' attitude. 'I love dust-jackets, fine dust-jackets. I still kick myself for what I did a couple of years ago at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair. There was a guy that had Réti's *Masters of the Chess Board* and a Marshall book, maybe Comparative Chess. And they were exquisite dust-jackets, perfect condition. The guy wanted 300 dollars a piece for them. And I am thinking, these are 50-75 dollar books, the guy is out of his mind! And I don't buy them. Then afterwards I fault myself and say, what are you thinking about? They are probably the only two copies in the world that pristine and you walked away from them? What kind of a collector are you? (Laughs)'

The famous game
of Cheſſe-play,
Truely diſcouered, and all doubts reſolued;
So that by reading this ſmall Booke thou
ſhalt profit more then by the playing
a thouſand Mates.
An Exerciſe full of delight; fit for Princes, or any
perſon of what qualitie ſoeuer.
Newly publiſhed by A. S. Gent.
If on your man you light
The firſt draught ſhall you play.
If not tis mine by right
At firſt to lead the way
Printed at London for Roger Iackſon, and are to be
ſould at his ſhop neere Fleetſtreete-Conduit. 1614.

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

This first published treatise on chess written by an Englishman is so rare that its previous owner had an asbestos case made for it to protect it against fire.

Although money played, and plays, a pivotal role both in his work on Wall Street and in collecting, he denies that the experience gained in the world of finance has been of help to him while assembling his collection. He learned more from the people he met and the praxis of collecting as he went along. The only real connection between Wall Street and collecting he sees is the relativity of value. 'I was just starting to figure out chess books, and in the second Michael Macdonald-Ross sale, Victor Keats (the author of the authoritative *Chessmen for Collectors* – DJtG) bought a Rowbothum, an English translation of Damiano, 1562. I'll never forget, he paid 2500 pounds for it, which in those days was an enormous amount of money. I was intrigued by the book, but I couldn't find anything about it. Then after he bought it, I stumbled on a Quaritch catalogue from 1909. I was going through it and I saw that Ruy Lopez was about 11 pounds, a Gianutio was maybe 10 pounds, the highest rare chess book was 15 pounds. And I get to the Rowbothum: 180 pounds! And I said, holy mackerel, look how rare! Quaritch at that time was viewed as the world's best antiquarian book dealer. So I thought I've got to try and buy this book from Victor. He was into sets, but he really knew nothing about books. About three weeks later he tried to sell everything that he bought. Everything at double the price. Now I had a dilemma. Am I going to allow the guy to make 2500 pounds? I thought about it and thought, you know it is really rare. And why is it that everybody else knows it's really rare? So I bought the book from him. And wouldn't you know it that last year I saw another copy of it and it was now offered for $30,000! I found a guy that would buy it, but by the time I caught the dealer to tell him to call this guy they had sold it. This year at the Antiquarian Book Fair I was talking to the dealer. He said, yes, I know who you are, I assume you had that book. I said, I did. And I asked him, did you know? And I gave him that story of 1909. He said, gee, I didn't know that. I have to tell you this, if we had known that we would have probably doubled the price! That book has tremendous significance, because it is the first real chess book done in English. It's a translation, but it still is. In that regard Wall Street helped me. I always think of Sam

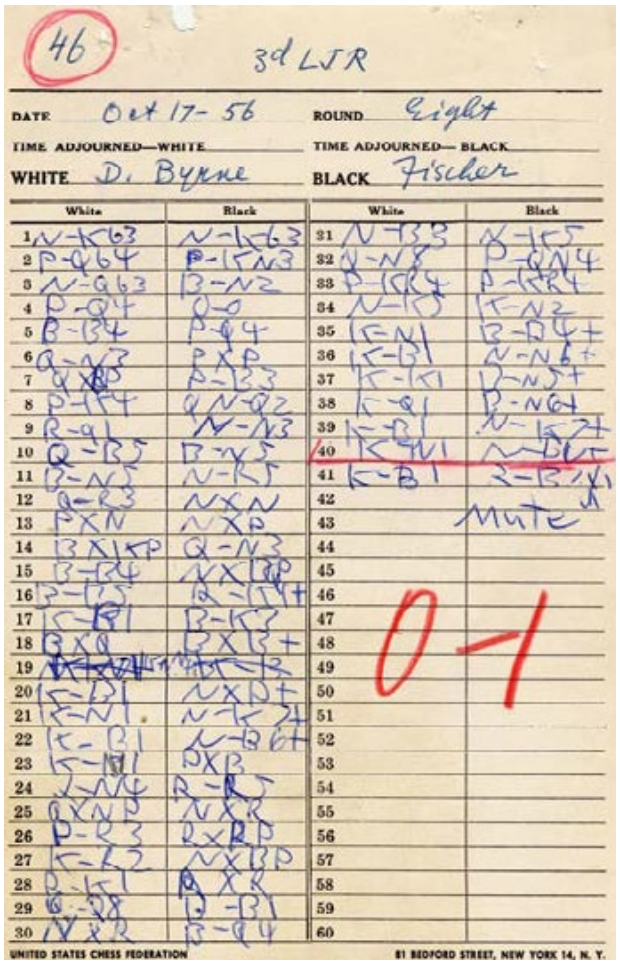
NEW IN CHESS

A view of the front part of David DeLucia's L-shaped 1000-square-foot library. On the left behind glass and amid exquisite tomes sits a bust of Paul Morphy.

Ennis. I would say, now David, you want to play the game sort of fairly, but think of Sam. Sam must have spent 80 per cent of his disposable income. So if there's something that you really want and that's going to add to your collection, just buy it.'

These valuable additions are not necessarily expensive. With relish he remembers how he found the earliest chess book printed in the United States. 'What I did for many years was that every three to six months, on a slow day at the office, I would call every dealer I knew and ask them if they had anything on chess. One time I call this place in Madrid, Spain, and I ask the guy if he has any chess books. He says, I only have three. The first two were nothing special and then he said I have this beginner's book, *Chess Made Easy*. My heart started to pound a bit and I was hoping he was going to say, Philadelphia 1802. And I said, what date is it? And he said, Philadelphia 1802. Then the last hurdle was, what's the price? And he had it on offer for 90 dollars. That was...'

He paid considerably more for the first published treatise on chess written by an Englishman (and not based on a previous work), Arthur Saul's *The famous game of Chesse-play*, London 1614. The booklet, consisting of 30 unnumbered leaves, was previously owned by the world-renowned book collector Bradley Martin, whose collection was auctioned in 1990 for a staggering 50 million dollars. For the Saul, DeLucia paid $22,000. It was the only chess book in Martin's library and he was aware of its great rarity. To protect it from fire Martin had a special asbestos case made for it, covered with leather.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DATE Oct 17-56 ROUND Eight

TIME ADJOURNED—WHITE TIME ADJOURNED—BLACK

WHITE D. Byrne BLACK Fischer

	White	Black		White	Black
1	N-KB3	N-KB3	31	N-B3	K-B2
2	P-Q4	P-K3	32	K-N2	P-QN4
3	N-Q B3	B-N2	33	P-KR4	P-R4
4	P-Q5	P-Q	34	N-B5	K-N2
5	B-B4	P-Q4	35	K-N1	B-Q4+
6	Q-N3	PXP	36	K-B1	N-N6+
7	Q-B3	P-B3	37	K-K1	B-N3+
8	P-K4	QN-Q2	38	K-Q1	P-N6
9	R-Q1	N-N3	39	K-B1	N-K7+
10	Q-B5	B-N5	40	K-N1	N-B5+
11	P-N3	N-K5	41	K-B1	R-R1 Mate
12	Q-R3	NXN	42		
13	PXN	N XP	43		
14	B X KP	Q-N3	44		
15	B-B4	N X BP	45		
16	B-B5	Q-K1+	46		
17	K-B1	B-K7	47		
18	B X Q	B X B+	48		
19	K-K1	P-K8=B	49		
20	K-B1	N X P+	50		
21	K-N1	N-K7+	51		
22	K-B1	N-B6+	52		
23	K-N1	B X B	53		
24	N-K6	R-R7	54		
25	R X NP	N X R	55		
26	P-B3	B X RP	56		
27	K-B2	N X BP	57		
28	R-K1	B X R	58		
29	Q-B8	B-B1	59		
30	N X R	B-Q4	60		

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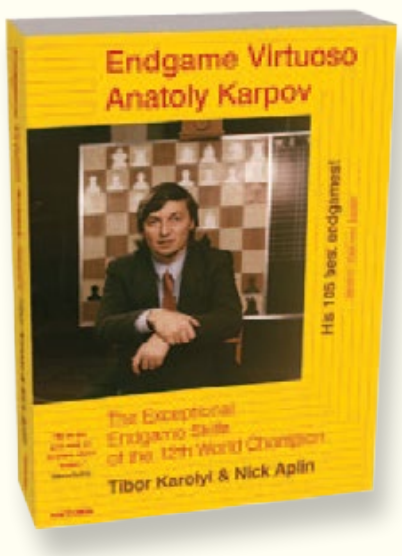
UNITED STATES CHESS FEDERATION 81 BEDFORD STREET, NEW YORK 14, N. Y.

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

The scoresheet of Bobby Fischer's 1956 win over Donald Byrne, 'the Game of the Century'.

DeLucia tells with visible pride that the Saul in the asbestos case is his son John David's favourite book in his library. With a broad smile he adds that his son is also represented in the collection with a book he made in school and that this book is as dear to him as all the other books. His family is also represented by numerous photographs that stress the private character of the room. He often calls the library his inner sanctum, but sometimes he also speaks of his memory room. Here he likes to withdraw and read or catalogue his books while listening to music or a ball game. Or just to think while watching photos. He sat here for hours last week after his sister Cheryl had died after a long battle with an incurable disease. Cheryl and he were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very close and her name pops up regularly in our conversations, mostly when he is talking about the goodness of people. He fondly remembers how she started sending homemade cookies and postcards to a correspondence chess friend of his. She'd never met him and never would, but believed he could use some attention from the stories her brother told her.

It's because the privacy of the room is sacrosanct to him that he is very reluctant to have visitors. His family members have been here, and some of his closest friends. But even guests to parties at his house who showed an interest to go up to his chess collection were told, often to their incomprehension, that this was impossible. One of the first things he told me when he came to pick me up at the railway station 50 minutes north of New York's Grand Central Station, was why, in the footsteps of a handful of collectors, I am the sixth person outside his most intimate circle that is welcome. Some years ago, during a trip abroad, when apart from the one television channel in his hotel there was no entertainment whatsoever in the evenings, he had thoroughly enjoyed the company of my first interview collection *Finding Bobby Fischer*. Interestingly, it was Fischer's personal copy of the book that he was reading, with his name stamped on page 39. That's what the American started doing somewhere in the 1990's, he'd stamp all his books with his name on either page 39 (March 9, his birthday) or 43 (1943, his year of birth).

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

An oil painting of Emanuel Lasker that used to hang in the Manhattan Chess Club.

DeLucia's library may be a highly private room, but this does not mean that he wants to keep his treasures to himself. It's always been his conviction that you should share the collection that you've got the luck and privilege to own with others. Last year he allowed his friend Jeff Kramer to publish a simply produced catalogue in two volumes of part of his collection. The two spiral bindings are a feast to leaf through for any chess lover, but unavoidably they are incomplete and don't contain his latest acquisitions, such as the manuscript of Reuben Fine's *Basic Chess Endings* or the guest book of the Saint Louis Chess Club containing countless autographs of well-known players from past and present.

However, the best introduction to the David DeLucia library are the beautifully produced books that he has published himself in limited editions. The first book, called *A Few Old Friends*, was published in 2003 and shows highlights of his collection in hundreds of colour and black-and-white photographs. Of that book he only made 150 copies. Four years later the second edition contained more than 750 photographs and appeared in a limited edition of 225 signed copies that soon found their way to fellow-collectors. In these marvellous books he not only accompanied the photos of the highlights by fascinating bits of historical information, but also by the estimated prices of the works presented. Not all his collector friends could appreciate this. Some of them preferred to leave aspiring newcomers in the dark, but this was an objection he didn't agree with at all.

Last year, assisted by his daughter Alessandra, he published *Bobby Fischer Uncensored*, a photographic impression of his vast Fischer collection, from early childhood books via authentic scoresheets and rare photos to Fischer's personal copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. As the title indicates, the book also contains numerous items and documents that express Fischer's pathological anti-Semitism. For understandable reasons their inclusion raised some eyebrows, but they are compensated for by an endless number of less controversial items, such as the typescript of *My 60 Memorable Games* when the title still was *My Memorable Games, 52 Tournament Games selected and annotated by Bobby Fischer*, and many fascinating letters. Here's a quote from an early handwritten note by Fischer on Botvinnik: 'Botvinnik was never a great chess player even at his 'peak'. There were always some ten chess players who would have beaten him in a match. He has a plus against but one player in matches – Ragosin. So where does Botvinnik's superiority lie? Why was he, as he put it, 'first among equals'? The truth is that Botvinnik's superiority lay in his maneuvers – not with the chess peices (sic) but off the chess boart (sic). Botvinnik wasted

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

A unique photo of a young Bobby Fischer playing chess in the bath tub.

his time playing chess. With a mind like his he could have become a top government official – maybe even Premier.' DeLucia comments: 'Years later Bobby had a good opinion of Botvinnik as a player but thought he was evil because of his arranging games and pre-arranged draws.'

The book also contains a vehement letter, written on 25 February 1999, from Fischer's lawyer Joseph Choate who roundly condemns his behaviour ('You ought to be ashamed of yourself!') and calls him an 'unmitigated ingrate'. Indeed, an ultra-rare example of criticism from someone around Fischer.

Not all items that are listed in the book appear as illustrations. Examples from a small photo album with photos of a naked female dancer taken by Fischer at a Budapest night club are understandably absent. DeLucia has them carefully wrapped up at the back of one of the Fischer cupboards in his library, as he doesn't want his children to stumble on them. I didn't get to see them either, but he revealed an interesting detail. In all photos one of Fischer's hands is also visible. When Pal Benko asked him why that was, Fischer answered that this was to have proof that he indeed took the pictures.

The third book with highlights that he is planning to make should surpass the others in all aspects. It will be bigger in size, even more lavishly illustrated, and it will be dedicated to his sister Cheryl. Because of her natural generosity ('I think Cheryl would have said, I want everybody to enjoy it') the book will also contain the famous unrecorded Capablanca game that attracted a lot of publicity when Olga Capablanca offered it for sale for $10,000 in Edward Winter's *Chess Notes* in 1987. Olga Capablanca witnessed the off-hand game between Capablanca and Tartakower in a Paris hotel room in or around 1938. She was in bed with a bad cold, while they played a game that her husband won. He wrote the game down on hotel stationery and gave it to her saying: 'Take it and hide it well. Some day in years to come it will buy you a beautiful bijou.' DeLucia bought it many years later together with a number of other unrecorded Capablanca games. He certainly didn't pay the amount she had asked, but nevertheless he had been reluctant to publish it so far, as this would have reduced its value. He didn't mind showing it to me, but I didn't get time to play through it. I probably didn't miss too much, as the rather uneventful game was balanced for a long time until Tartakower made a mistake in a rook ending.

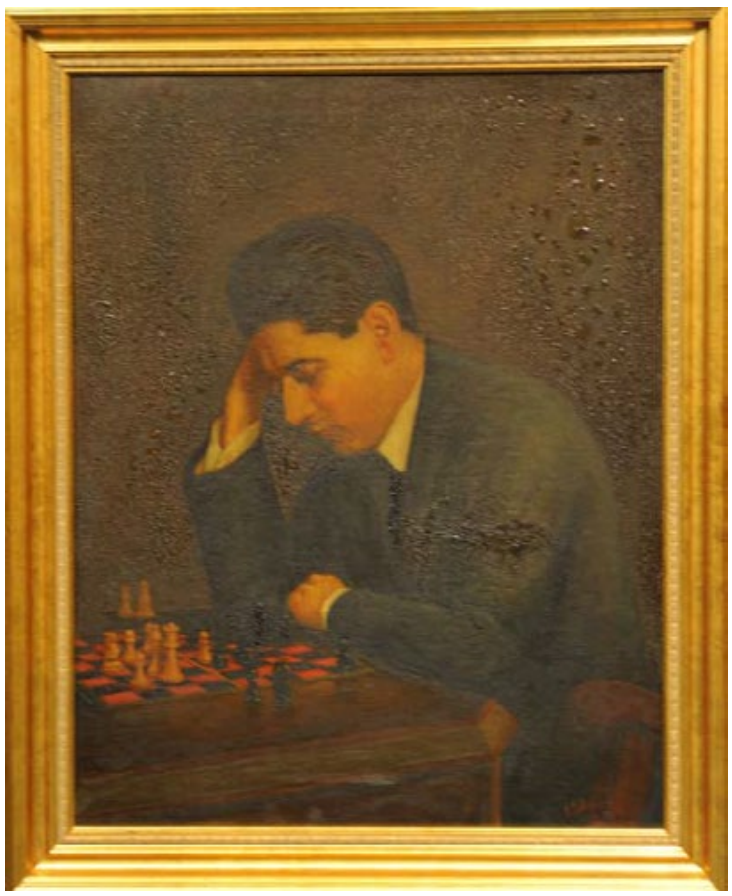
Another nugget in the third book to look forward to is a CD with footage of a very young Fischer playing blitz while his mother is cutting pieces of watermelon for him.

For most chess book collectors size matters. Roughly speaking you join the elite circle of big collectors when you can boast between 5,000 and 10,000 or more books. The biggest private collection in the world is that of German grandmaster and arbiter Lothar Schmid, who at the age of 82 boasts to have amassed 50,000 chess books, an amount that defeats the imagination. In DeLucia's philosophy a craving for quality is miles ahead of a yearning for quantity. 'Lothar is one of those guys who want to have everything. As a certain collector said, there comes a point in time when having an enormous amount of books becomes more of a negative than a positive. It really does. I am trying to collect the right way. If I wanted to buy everything, I could, but I don't want to do it that way. I don't want to be viewed as the guy who doesn't know what he is doing, but boy, he wants to have everything. I want to be associated more with a thoughtful collector that understood what he wanted the collection to be. That's why I do an awful lot of research. For me it is special to put your imprimatur on your collection. A great collection should be what you really love. Some time ago I had three or four decorators here in the house. But with all of them I got into a fight. And I didn't understand why that was

until I realized that what they wanted to do was not me. And the library is me.'

When I urge him to give an estimate of the size of his collection, he's not too enthusiastic. In fact he would like to downsize it, reiterating that the numbers are irrelevant to him. When I insist, using the readers' curiosity as a pretext, he says that he has some seven to eight thousand books, a similar number of autographs (letters, score-sheets, manuscripts) and about one thousand items of 'ephemera'. He confesses that for himself he has already made a selection of items he would keep if for some reason he had to reduce his collection. This selection consists of 1500 items. This may sound modest, but he quickly explains that for instance the 120 score-sheets of the 1927 New York tournament or all Lasker manuscripts are only one item.

Lothar Schmid he has met on various occasions, but the German collector has not been in his library. When I ask him directly if he would allow Schmid to see it, he smiles and hesitates. 'That's a good question. I don't know. He's always welcome in my home. The collection I don't know.' In the past years many stories have been doing the rounds about Schmid wanting or having to sell his collection. One collector told me that he wanted to sell it for six million euro. To DeLucia



NEW IN CHESS

The recently acquired original oil painting of Capablanca by Cuban artist Esteban Valderrama.

he offered it for 20 million euro some five years ago. The Schmid collection contains numerous items that DeLucia would love to have, such as the three (out of eight) Damiano editions that he doesn't have, or several Lucena's, but he readily agrees that both 6 and 20 million euro are totally unrealistic figures.

Even though DeLucia is not interested in collecting everything, he and Schmid were rivals on various occasions. One memorable occasion was the auction of the library of André Muffang in Paris on June 6th 1991. Here DeLucia acquired both a Lucena manuscript and a first edition Damiano. Schmid had asked him not to bid on the Damiano and also tried to obtain the Lucena manuscript, but in both cases he was unsuccessful. For DeLucia the Muffang auction was a strange mix of highs and lows, as his father-in-law had passed away a day earlier. He could not attend the

THE DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

The Mathew Brady photo of Paul Morphy inscribed by the American champion in 1859.

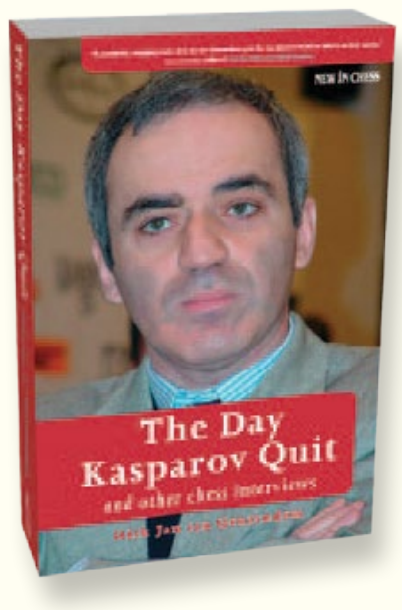
auction, but found the Paris book dealer Chamonel ready to do the bidding for him. The Lucena manuscript was surrounded by strange stories. Till the auction it had been in Schmid's house for 10 years. After Muffang's death Schmid claimed that the French collector had given it to him. Only when the Muffang heirs threatened to take him to court did he admit that he only had it on loan and returned it. When you speak to collectors it usually doesn't take long before they tell you a story or anecdote about Lothar Schmid's notorious collecting practices and his tricks to obtain books at all cost. DeLucia didn't mention any of them, but when I prodded him he agreed that he also had his 'Lothar trade' as he calls it. 'I got tak-

en once by him, very small. I had an original print of Alekhine-Euwe. He said, I have it but this one is better, I'd like to trade it. I have a very rare book. And I said, what is it? Till this day I don't like looking at the book. It is a chess tournament in Uruguay in 1960. Which I have subsequently seen sold on eBay for 12 dollars. But it was short-sighted and a mistake on his part. If you want to cheat me you can cheat me, but you will do it only once. I'll never forget.'

DeLucia knows from experience that investing in your relations and connections is a much wiser and more rewarding way of life. The best example he can give is his relationship with the Manhattan Chess Club. In the years before it was closed, the club had serious financial problems and at some point they decided to sell part of their collection, including the Capablanca memorabilia that Olga Capablanca had given to the club through the years. DeLucia contacted the president of the club, Jeff Kossak, and told him that he'd better the best bid they'd get. The best bid was $18,000 by Laszlo Polgar and instead of $18,001 DeLucia wrote them a cheque for $25,000. Apart from making annual financial donations, he again showed his love for the club where he'd played so many games when he presented them with a large number of books and manuscripts that he felt didn't fit into his collection. When the club closed its doors in 2002, his friendship with Kossak brought him several new highlights in his collection. 'Jeff would come out here and play chess. One day he said, listen, it's over, nobody wants the club. We had a long discussion. I said, Jeff, the Internet is telling you something. I am happy to be a real free market guy and if you have to give the club 25 or 50,000 dollars every year of your own money, isn't that telling you that the people don't want it? And he said, you know David, you're hundred per cent right. After it closed its doors three or four years went by. And I asked him, Jeff, are you ever going to do something with the archives and all the other things? Is there some way I can buy it from the club? He told me, David, there is no one left. A lot of the older guys that were on the board, they were all dead. He said, I'll think about it. Jeff was really well-to-do and that was his way of saying, I don't want to deal with it. Then four or five months later he says, I've been thinking about what we were talking about lately. It's crazy for you not to have it, you were so generous with the club. He could have sold it to me, but where was the money going to go?'

When he was called to come and pick the archives up there was one item he was particularly looking forward to. 'I knew that in the last year a number of things had been stolen. And as they started bringing out the boxes I was praying and hoping that the contract for the Zukertort-Steinitz match was there. I kept putting the stuff in the truck and finally some boxes came that looked like it might be in there. I remember opening up the book and on page 21, as I turned it, there was the contract. I remember till this day, all the cars are going by, the horns are beeping, and I am looking at the back of the truck and I got it.'

When you have such a rich collection and have been able to acquire such a number of unique collectibles, the question inevitably arises how to continue when there is less and less on the market that you'd like to add. He regrets that Kurt Landsberger, the biographer of William Steinitz, has decided to turn his Steinitz collection into a small museum in New Jersey. He would have loved to buy it, but now it's out of



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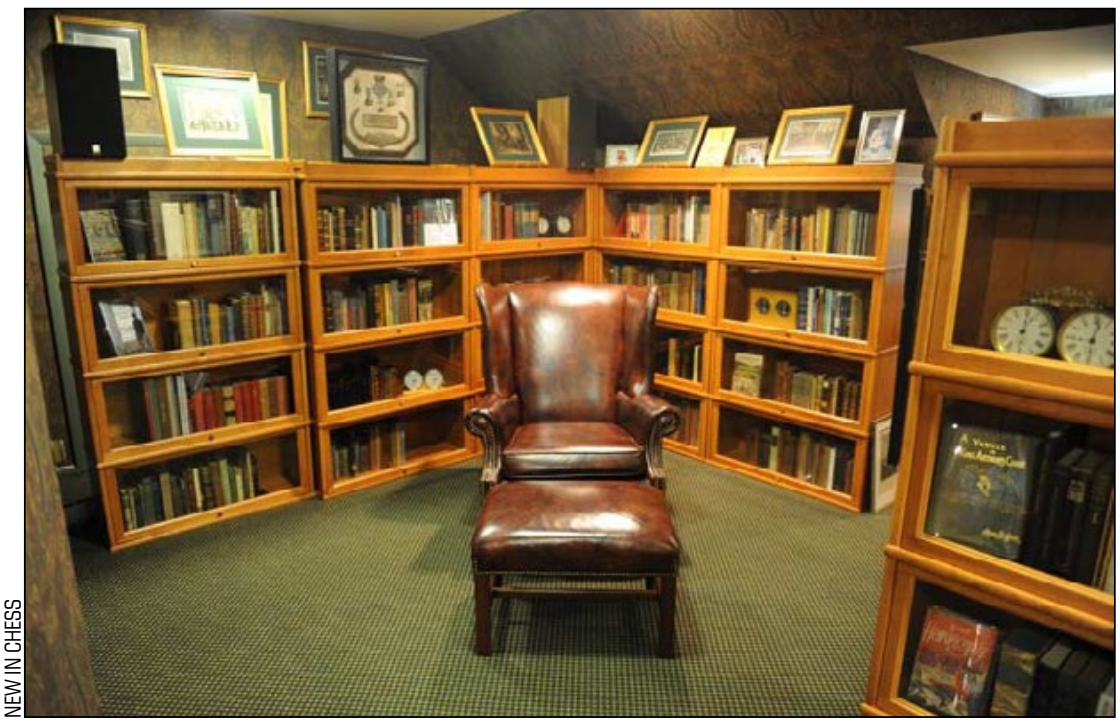
circulation for good. He also regrets that he no longer has that indomitable drive that he used to have. To me this regret seems exaggerated, as on my arrival he told me about three books he had been bidding on that same morning, and only a week ago had he acquired the manuscript of Vladimir Nabokov's 1953 book on chess problems, with most problems signed by the author. But he insists that he no longer has the fervour he had in his working days. When he would get up at 3.30 a.m. to work out for an hour and then drive to work. He wishes he had Lothar Schmid's addiction to chase books that he still wants to have and laughing out loud he imitates the accent of a French collector that occasionally calls him. 'He is in his nineties, but hasn't lost any of his passion. He will call and say, Mr. DeLucia, can I buy your collection? And I tell him that it's not for sale. I know, he says, but I'd still like to buy it.'

A related question is what he hopes will happen to his collection after he has finished enjoying it. He is 57 now and normally speaking it will be his for many years to come, but the moment will arrive when they will go their separate ways. 'I fantasize that my son would some day like to do it, I'd love to see two generations have a go at it, but that's probably not going to happen. It's just like Lothar's collection, his kids don't care about it.' He says that he's given this question a lot of thought, possibly even too much. He agonizes about it. To begin with there is the question whether his collection should go to one or more private collectors or to a public institution. The latter option doesn't seem very likely after a recent experience. 'I won't mention names, but the father of my piano teacher was a big composer for the big band era. Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller. His dad and another man, they worked together when they were alive. The other guy died about 20 years ago and he left his body of work to an institution in Connecticut, a world-famous, big institution. And Jamie's dad died two years ago and he now wants to leave his daddy's body of work to this institution, too. So they're all working to donate it. In the meantime the Hartford Symphonic wants to do a special event of their music. So they go to this institution to look at the stuff. The institution can't find it (laughs). And I say, gee Jamie, why would you give your dad's work to an institution that can't even find the other half? That's why I'd rather see my collection go to a collector, a real bona fide collector, somebody I knew was going to take it to the next level.'

And then, not for the first time in our conversations, he says, 'I can't tell you how often I have thanked God and my lucky stars that I've been blessed to have all these things.'



NEW IN CHESS

David DeLucia's armchair in a corner of his 'inner sanctum' or 'memory room', a perfect place to read and think.

At the end of our second interview session I ask David DeLucia if his former colleague at Salomon Brothers, who spurred his collecting, ever saw the fruit of his emphatic suggestion. The answer is almost abrupt. 'No. You know, it's funny with people like that. Guys that grow up with silver spoons in their mouths don't want to be associated with guys that grew up in New Haven. That's just the way it is. That's why to this day the people that I am much warmer to are blue-collar people. He was very kind to me, I think, because he felt it was the right thing for him to do in his career. As I became more and more senior on Wall Street, he liked talking to me for information, because I was plugged in with all the heads on Wall Street. But I also knew that as soon as I left Wall Street he would never call me again. And that's what happened.'

He says he understands and doesn't mind, but I still feel he regrets it. It's hard to imagine that his colleague wouldn't look with approval at his wonderful home, which was originally built by a heiress to the Van Cleef and Arpels family, and wouldn't be deeply impressed by his splendid and exquisite chess collection on the second floor of that beautiful home. That is, if he'd be allowed to go up and see it...

With yet another historical performance (7½ out of 10 and a performance rating of 2918), Magnus Carlsen confirmed his status of absolute favourite at the Kings' Tournament in Romania. In the process the Norwegian world number one raised his Elo to 2826, the second highest rating ever, 25 points shy of Garry Kasparov's 2851 all-time high. Carlsen cruised to victory with five wins and five draws, thus winning his third Grand Slam tournament in a row

Carlsen

King of the Kings in Romania

Peter Doggers

Thousands of fans had been waiting for months to see some of the best players in the world kick off in Romania. When the moment was finally there, the match took off at full speed from the very first minute. Early goals were scored by the Azeri, Israeli and Romanian side. After a somewhat slow start the Norwegian centre forward finally hit the net after about half an hour, and three more goals followed, completing a perfect hat trick in the second half. Already the man of the match, he scored one more time in the last minute. After the final whistle of the referee, the vuvuzelas of the Norwegian supporters could be heard for hours into the night.

Don't worry, you're not holding a soccer magazine in your hand, and you've probably already seen and read more than enough about the FIFA World Cup. But one cannot deny that football played a major role at the fourth Kings' Tournament held in Bazna and Medias, Romania, during the first half of the World Cup in South Africa. When the players mentioned the 'nice and relaxed atmosphere' during the closing ceremony, they were partly referring to the evenings in the restaurant, where everybody enjoyed dinner together while watching the likes of Messi, Fabiano and Villa.

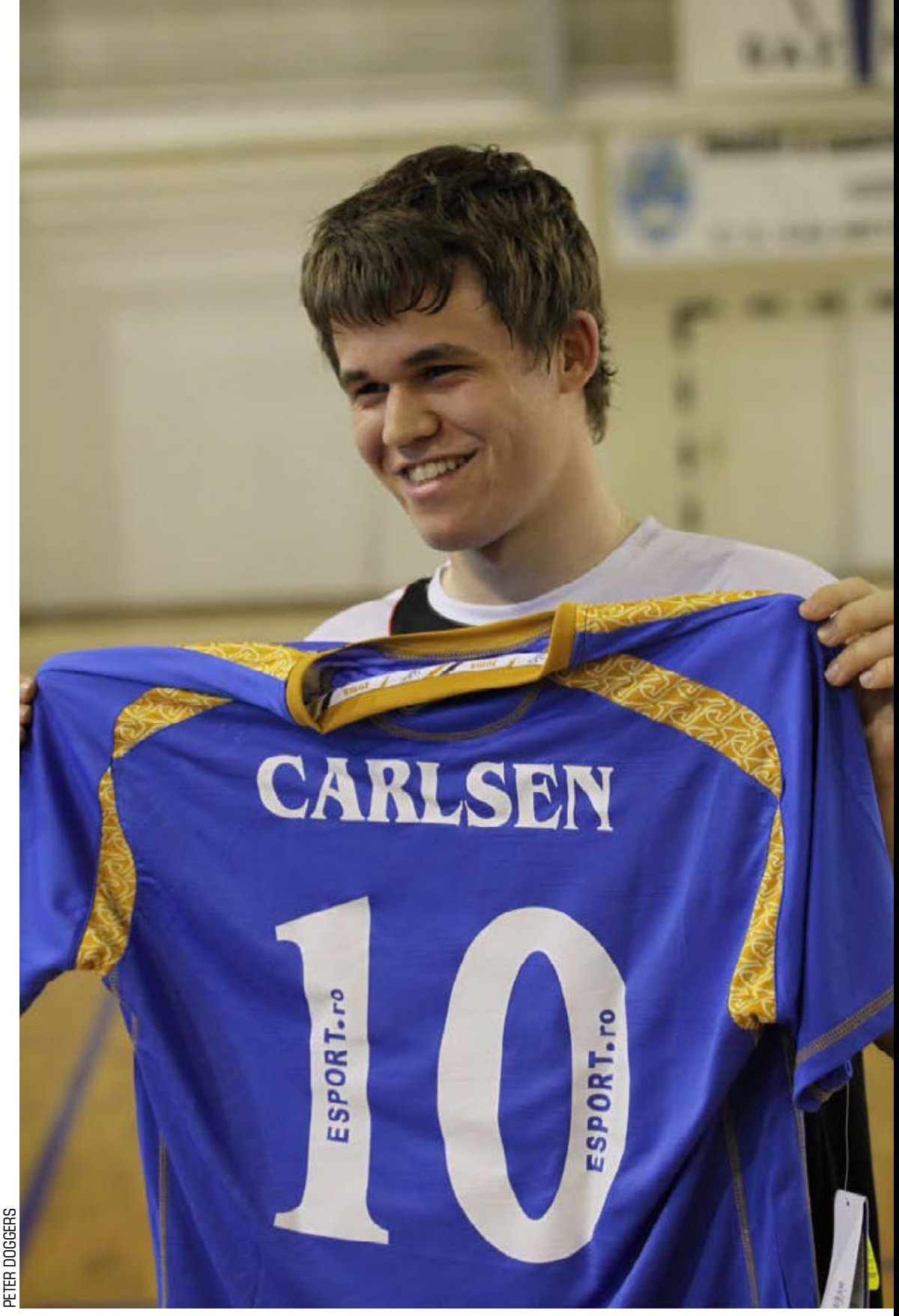
Traditionally, ball virtuosos show their tricks at half-time, and this is what happened at the Kings' Tournament too. On both rest days a group of chess virtuosos (players and organizers) showed their indoor soccer skills at the sports complex of the local

MEDIAS/BAZNA

basketball team in Medias. Half the players participated – Carlsen, Nisipeanu and Ponomariov – but a total of seven grandmasters could be seen on the pitch thanks to seconds Alexander Moiseenko (Ponomariov), Alexander Khuzman (Gelfand), Viorel Iordachescu (Nisipeanu), and press officer Dorian Rogozenco. Of the players, Carlsen scored the most goals, while Khuzman proved a very solid defender. It should also be mentioned that chief arbiter Faik Gasanov from Azerbaijan, who has reached the respectable age of 72, is still an amazing football player who doesn't fear anyone!

Despite scoring the greatest number of goals off the pitch as well, Carlsen still thought he could have done better. At chess, that is. 'There are still things that I'd like to improve', said the Norwegian, moments after he won his last-round game against Wang Yue. 'But of course with such a score you have to be satisfied. I am very happy with the result, that's for sure.' And who wouldn't be, with 7½/10 in such a field – yet another performance of historical value. At the Kings' Tournament Carlsen finished first with five wins and five draws, which resulted in a 2918 performance. On the July list, his rating will be 2826, just 25 points behind his former trainer's record of 2851.

It was a remarkable result in a remarkable tournament, which took place in not one, but two locations. For the first six rounds, the venue was the Documentation and Information Centre of sponsor Romgaz. It's a nice building which includes a small museum dedicated to natural gas, but... it's located in Medias. This town is about 15 kilometres south of Bazna, where the players and everyone else were staying. Ponomariov in particular wasn't very happy with the daily 25-minute drive to the venue, despite the police escort to avoid traffic jams. The Ukrainian felt he played too superficially in the opening phase as a result.



PETER DOGGERS

Football played an undeniable role at the Kings' Tournament. The players followed the World Cup matches in South Africa and Magnus Carlsen and various colleagues happily jumped at the opportunity to play themselves.

After six rounds it was decided to move back to Bazna, basically because the brand-new venue wasn't prepared for the exceptional weather conditions. After two very hot first days (about 35 degrees Celsius), the weather started showing a curious but very consistent, almost tropical behaviour each day, with sunshine in the mornings and heavy thunderstorms in the afternoons. During the sixth round the roof of the playing hall started to leak, and drops of rain fell on the board of Carlsen and Ponomariov. The organizers didn't want to risk any more such problems, and so the conference hall of the hotel complex became the new playing hall, just like in the first three editions

of the tournament. None of the players complained about this change, as they suddenly had an extra 30 minutes before the game to prepare, and more time afterwards to watch the football. (Most players supported favourites Brazil and Spain, although Gelfand said he 'always supports Holland'.)

Bazna is an old little balneary town situated north of Sibiu County in Transylvania, about 300 kilometres northwest of the Romanian capital Bucharest. The region is known for its many medieval fortified churches and villages. As the legend goes, the name of the town comes from the word basna, meaning 'living fire', because the area has many natural gas resources. It's no coincidence that the sponsor of the tournament, the Romanian state company Romgaz, owns the Bazna Balneary Complex Expro, where everyone stayed.

In the summer the complex attracts locals as well as international tourists, who can enjoy a basketball court, two tennis courts and both an outdoor and an indoor pool. The latter contains local minerals with healing power, following a century-old tradition. The mineral waters of Bazna were already mentioned in books from the 17th century, while the natural gas was discovered in 1671. During the final four rounds of the tournament the participants had to pass this indoor pool, with a view of relaxing tourists in swimming gear, each time they went to the playing hall and/or the toilets.

Romgaz is one of the largest natural gas producers in Romania and Eastern Europe. The company sponsors clubs of several sports, like table tennis and basketball, and added chess to their portfolio in 2007. In that year the Kings' Tournament was held for the first time. The first two editions had legends (or 'Kings', as the tournament's name refers to them) like Mecking, Portisch and Timman, but the individual victories went to 'youngsters' Khalifman and Short.

Last year the Kings' Tournament was transformed into a Super GM tournament, which was won by Ivanchuk, ahead of Gelfand. This year saw the same format: six players, double round-robin. Although the sponsor spoke of a multi-year plan, the budget for 2010 was finalized as late as April. When the invitations were sent out, Ivanchuk had already committed himself to the Capablanca Memorial. The good news was that the tournament got promoted to official Grand Slam status after this year's MTel Masters was cancelled. The presence of the world's number one Magnus Carlsen added even more cachet. This fourth edition was by far the strongest tournament ever held in Romania.

In one of the poorer countries of Europe, and in a time of crisis, it would be an understatement to call it 'difficult' to find a sponsor for such an event. Romgaz defends its (to some locals remarkable) sponsoring policy by saying it wants to draw attention to this tourist region. And indeed it is a region that is trying hard to improve. Quite a few guesthouses are scattered throughout Bazna, which also has many dilapidated

PETER DOGGERS

In the hotel lobby Magnus Carlsen and Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu follow the analysis of one of the games still in progress.

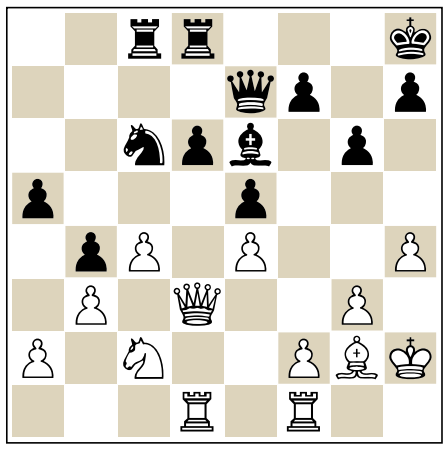
VIOREL COSTEA

And here are the teams. Back row: Iordachescu, Moiseenko, Carlsen, Khuzman, Gasanov, Nisipeanu, Ponomariov, Patrui, M.Opriscan. Front row: Gabar, F.Opriscan, Petroaie, Campeanu, Chirila, Doggers, Rogozenco.

old houses. It is said that many land owners prefer to wait until an old house collapses, as this is cheaper than to have it demolished. In a town where you'll still see horses and wagons, there is a strong contrast with the luxurious hotel complex, built on the hillside and visible from just about anywhere in Bazna.

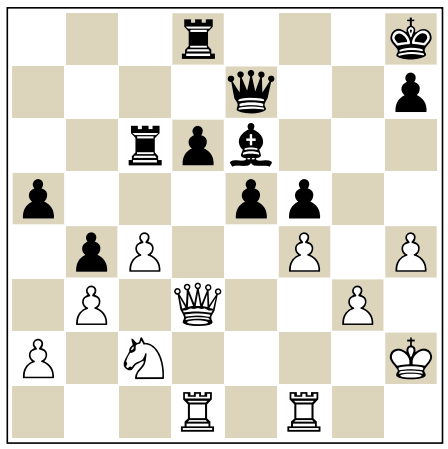
The technical part of the tournament was mostly taken care of by Romgaz employees, while Elisabeta Polihroniade and Emil Danut Gabar took care of the chess part. Polihroniade (75), a WGM, is the most famous chess personality in Romania. She hosted a chess programme on TV for no fewer than 24 years, between 1979 and 2003. Especially before the revolution, her weekly 20-30 minutes on chess had quite an impact, considering the fact that there was often just two hours of TV each day in total. These days Polihroniade is an international arbiter, organizer and author, and thanks to her, the wonderful tradition of tournament books is still alive in Romania.

It took a few rounds before the tournament standings started to take shape. The winners of the first round, Gelfand and Nisipeanu, both lost in Round 4. During the first rest day Carlsen and Radjabov were on plus one, followed by Gelfand, Nisipeanu and Ponomariov on 50 percent. In this phase, Nisipeanu's victory over Radjabov was particularly pretty. At the start of the tournament the Azeri grandmaster was suffering from a cold and played too much on autopilot, yet Nisipeanu's play was very strong in this first round:

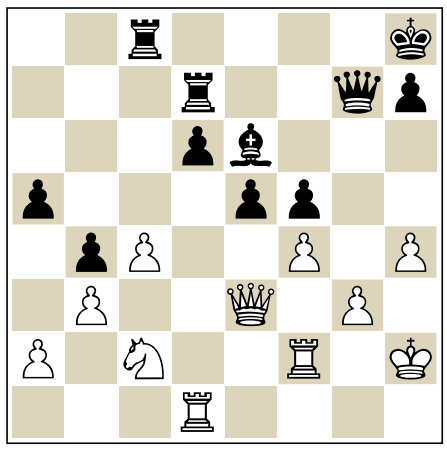


Nisipeanu-Radjabov
Medias/Bazna 2010 (1)
position after 21.♔h2

21...f5?
Too ambitious.
22.exf5! gxf5 23.♗xc6!
A strong, strategical decision by Nisipeanu, who exchanges his fianchettoed bishop for Black's knight to end up with knight against bad bishop. White's next move, perhaps a little counter-intuitive after he has already played h4, is part of this plan.
23...♖xc6 24.f4!

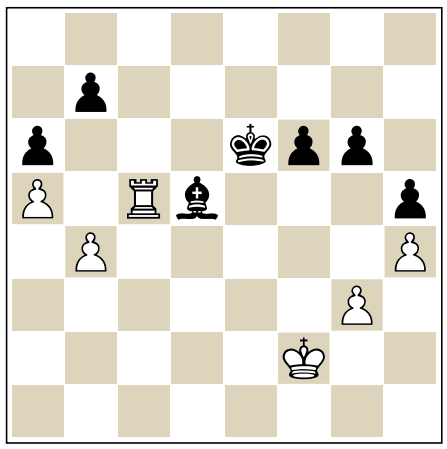


Not only is Black's bishop very passive now, but his pawns are also weak.
24...♖cc8 25.♕e3 ♕g7 26.♖f2 ♖d7?!
A final inaccuracy in a difficult position.



27.♘d4! Now Black's position collapses. The knight goes to b5, attacking d6.
27...♕g4 28.♖dd2 ♖e8 29.♘b5 d5
Desperation.
30.♘d6!
Precise till the end.
30...♖ed8 31.♕xe5+ ♕g7 32.c5 ♕xe5 33.fxe5 ♖c7 34.♖c2 d4 35.♖fd2 f4 36.gxf4 d3 37.♖xd3 ♗f5 38.♘f7+ ♔g7 39.♖g2+
Black resigned.

But it soon became clear that it was going to be another 'Carlsen story' in Bazna/Medias. The world's number one started with three draws, but then he won four games in a row. In the first, he avoided Wang Yue's Petroff Defence in a very original way: by playing the King's Gambit for the first time in his career – appropriately picking the Kings' Tournament for it. It must be said that the Chinese grandmaster easily reached an equal position, but he got into trouble later and then blundered in an endgame in which he already was an exchange down.

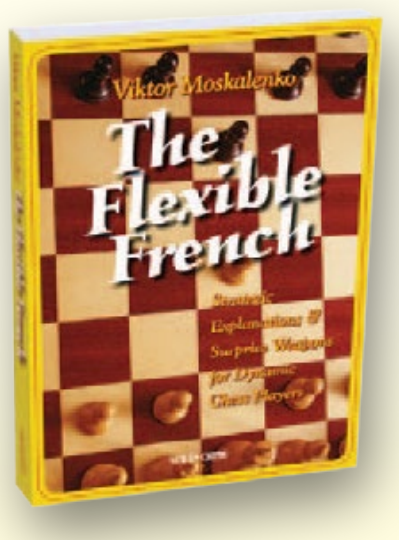


Carlsen-Wang Yue
Medias/Bazna 2010 (4)
position after 45.g3

45...g5?
This loses by force, but as press officer Dorian Rogozenco explained, the position must be lost anyway: 'White brings the king to d4, then attacks the pawn f6 with the rook, forcing Black to play ...♔e6, then White goes with the king to b6 and takes with the rook on b7, winning.'
46.g4! The breakthrough theme that's known from pawn endings also works here.
46...hxg4 47.h5 ♗e4 48.♖c7 f5 49.h6 f4 50.h7 g3+ 51.♔e1 f3 52.h8♕ f2+ 53.♔e2 ♗d3+ 54.♔e3
Black resigned.

Wang Yue played his worst tournament in a long time. He was clearly affected by a most unfortunate course of events before the tournament. The Chinese GM had planned to fly from Beijing to Frankfurt, then transfer to Munich and from there to Sibiu. However, shortly before leaving he learnt that he would need a visa to transfer within a Schengen country, and so he had to change his ticket and go for a direct Beijing-Munich flight. This may sound like a better option, but the result was that he and his second Wen Yang had to spend 24 hours at a transfer gate at Munich airport. Never really getting over his jetlag, Wang Yue looked tired throughout the tournament.

The sixth round saw a critical moment in the game Ponomariov-Carlsen, and indirectly it was also a crucial moment in the tournament. (We're not talking about the raindrops on the board, which luckily appeared when Carlsen



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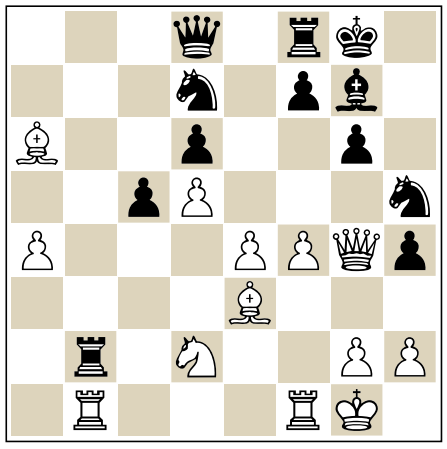
PETER DOGGERS

Tournament director Elisabeta Polihroniade is a chess celebrity in Romania. For twenty-four years she hosted a chess programme on TV.

was already winning.) It was the only game in which the Norwegian got into trouble, and if Ponomariov had converted his winning advantage, things might have gone differently.



Ponomariov-Carlsen
Medias/Bazna 2010 (6)
position after 21.♖ab1

Due to a tactical oversight in the opening, Black lost a pawn without compensation. He finds a way to complicate matters.

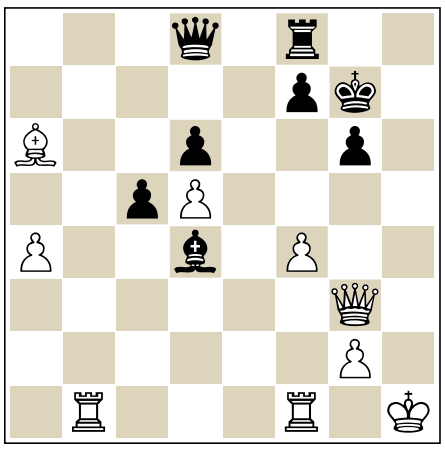
21...♖xd2!?

An exchange sacrifice that's objectively losing, but strong in practice. If White holds on to his material, Black gets interesting attacking chances.

22.♗xd2 ♗d4+ 23.♖f2?

After calculating the alternative for a long time, Ponomariov goes for the move that seems much easier. However, since it's refuted by Black's simple 25th move, it should be called a blunder.

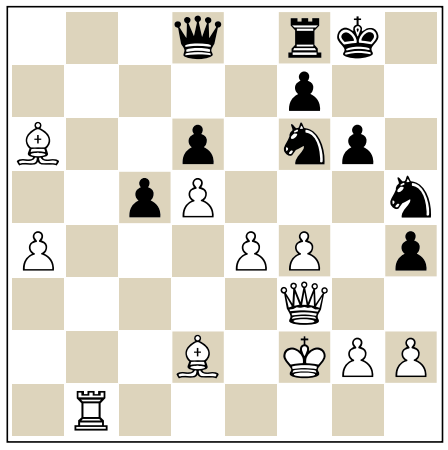
After 23.♔h1 White gets on top with careful play: 23...♘df6 24.♕f3 (or even 24.♕xh4 ♘xe4 25.♗e1!) 24...♘g3+ (24...♘xe4 25.♕xe4 ♘g3+ 26.hxg3 hxg3 27.f5, and wins) 25.hxg3 hxg3 26.♗e1 ♘xe4 27.♗xg3 ♘xg3+ 28.♕xg3 ♔g7,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now the move that Ponomariov played in the game: 29.♖f2!, and White is winning.

23...♗xf2+ 24.♔xf2 ♘df6 25.♕f3

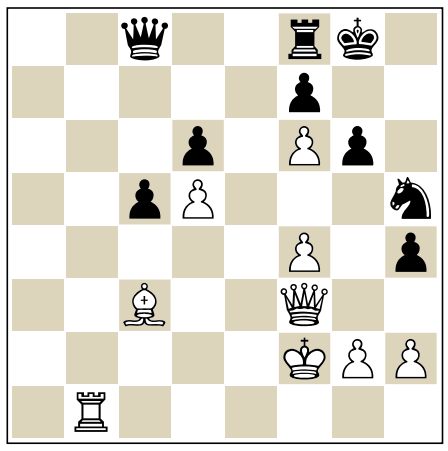


25...♕e8!

This wins back the pawn, after which Black is better.

26.e5 ♕xa4 27.exf6 ♕xa6 28.♗c3 ♕c8?!

28...♕c4! would have decided the game much more quickly, as 29.f5 ♘xf6 grabs the pawn with tempo.



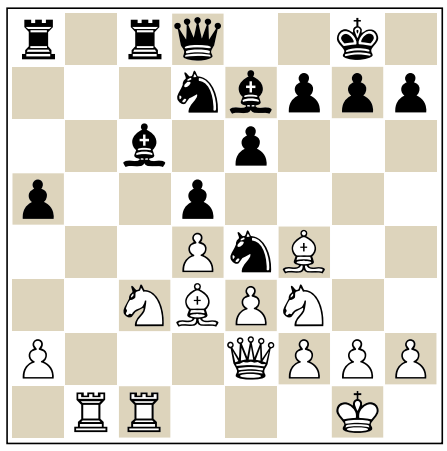
29.♔g1?!

White misses his last chance: 29.f5! ♕xf5 30.♕xf5 gxf5 31.♖b6 ♖d8 32.♔f3, and White's activity gives reasonable drawing chances.

29...♕f5 30.♖f1 ♖e8 31.♗a1 ♖a8 32.♕e3 ♔h7 33.♗b2 ♖b8 34.♗c1 ♖b1 35.♕e8 ♕xd5 36.f5 gxf5 37.♕e3 ♕d4 38.♕xd4 cxd4 39.♗g5 ♖xf1+ 40.♔xf1 h3 41.gxh3 ♔g6 42.♗h4 ♘f4 43.♗g3 ♔g5 44.♗f2 ♘e6 45.♔e2 f4 46.♔f3 d3 47.h4+ ♔f5 48.♗b6 ♘c5 49.h5 d2 50.♔e2 ♘e4

White resigned.

After beating Radjabov in a drawn rook ending in Round 7 Carlsen was a point clear of the rest of the field with three rounds to go, so his game as Black against Gelfand, who was second (and a point clear of Radjabov), could still shake up the standings. And the Israeli grandmaster did create a slight advantage after Carlsen allowed some unnecessary tactics.

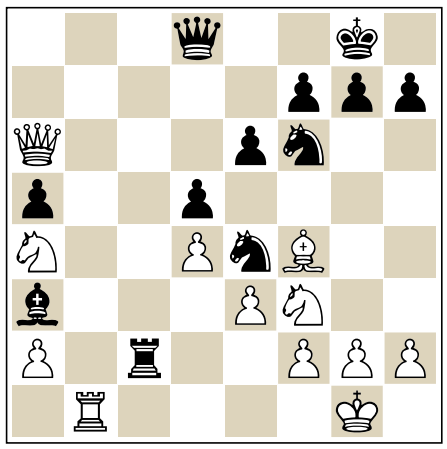


Gelfand-Carlsen
Medias/Bazna 2010 (8)
position after 16.♖fc1

16...♘df6 This allows complications which favour White. 16...♗b4 was better and should lead to equality.

17.♗a6 ♗a3 17...♗b7 18.♗xb7 ♘xc3 19.♕c2!, as pointed out by Carlsen after the game, is good for White. If Black wants to play this, he needs to exchange knights first: 17...♘xc3 18.♖xc3 ♗b7 19.♖xc8 ♗xc8, but the players agreed that White is slightly better after 20.♗d3 or 20.♗b5.

18.♖c2 ♖xa6 19.♕xa6 ♗a4 20.♘xa4 ♖xc2

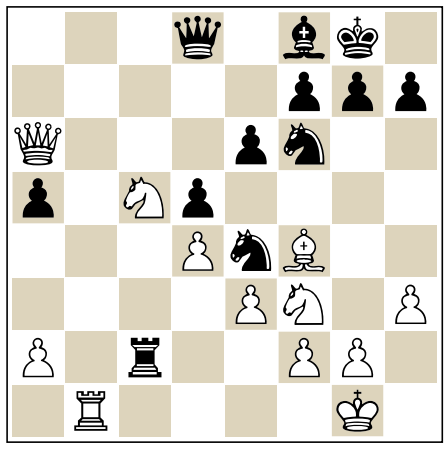


After a more or less forced sequence of moves the game has reached a critical position.

21.h3

21.♘e1 may have been the best, but after 21...♖c8 22.♘b6 ♖c3 23.♕xa5 ♗f8 White's extra pawn, as in the game, is not of great value.

21...♗f8 22.♘c5



22...h6

Not 22...♖xf2? 23.♘xe6! fxe6 24.♕xe6+ ♔h8 25.♖b8, and White wins.

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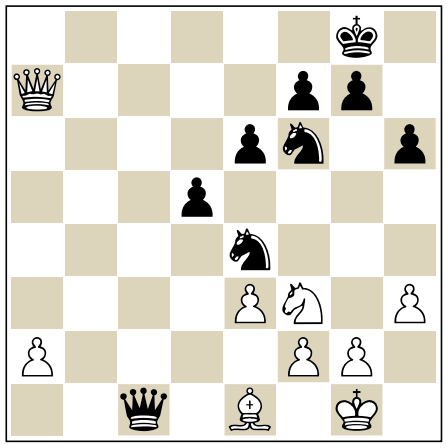
PETER DOGGERS

A view of the playing room in Medias, where the first six rounds were played before the tournament moved back to Bazna.

23.♕a7 ♗xc5 24.dxc5 ♖xc5 25.♖b8 ♖c8 26.♗c7

A nice way to draw is 26.♘e5 ♖xb8 27.♕xf7+ ♔h8 28.♘g6+ ♔h7 29.♗xb8 ♕xb8 30.♘f8+ ♔h8 31.♘g6+.

26...♕e8 27.♖xc8 ♕xc8 28.♗xa5 ♕c1+ 29.♗e1



29...♘d2!

Gelfand missed this move. He had expected 29...♘g5, when White has 30.♕b8+ ♔h7 31.♘xg5+ hxg5 32.♕b4.

30.♘xd2 ♕xe1+ 31.♘f1 ♘e4 32.♕b8+ ♔h7 33.♕b2

Draw. There's no way White can profit from his passed pawn. In fact it's Black who has a slight advantage, but he cannot seriously play for a win either.

Ponomariov and Radjabov analysed this game live in the hotel lobby together with Iordachescu and Rogozenco. 'Gelfand stands better,' Ponomariov said, 'but this Carlsen is a tricky guy. Very tricky.' The two had enough time to look at the game, as they had drawn quickly themselves. At the Kings' Tournament no draws were allowed before move 30, except in cases of threefold repetition, perpetual chess or a theoretically drawn position. For next year the organizers might as well adopt the full Sofia Rule, and not just for the first 30 moves, since a number of games ended in draws at or just after move 30, while the position was still full of life.

Still, the chess fans couldn't complain too much about the fighting spirit in Romania, as exactly half of the games were decided. Thus, Carlsen's score of five wins and five draws reflected the tournament well, and so did his colour distribution. The Norwegian won three games with the black pieces and two as White. Thanks to a curious last round, with three '0-1' results, there were eight black victories in total, against seven for White.

'It has to stop somewhere,' Carlsen's father Henrik said at the start of the tournament. 'He won the last couple of tournaments he played in. You cannot do this forever. In fact, Magnus is under a bit more pressure here, since for the first time he's the absolute favourite.' And indeed, in Romania there was no Anand, no Aronian, no Kramnik and no Topalov. Carlsen was rated 61 points higher than the number two seed Wang Yue, who badly under-performed. But the 19-year-old Norwegian again proved that he was up to the job. For the moment there's just no stopping him.

NEW!

Lubomir Ftacnik: 1.d4 - a classical repertoire for White

This new DVD by Lubomir Ftacnik is an ambitious project. It is a wide-ranging presentation of the ideas and structures which can arise in the various openings after 1.d4. In a total of 34 videos (plus an introduction and some concluding remarks) the author deals with everything which you have to be prepared for after playing 1.d4 – classic openings such as all the lines of the Queen's Gambit and the Indian defences, as well as many interesting subsidiary variations like the Volga Gambit or the Blumenfeld Gambit. On this DVD GM Lubomir Ftacnik brings to bear all his experience of three decades on the international chess scene. Ftacnik presents recommendations for all the systems for Black which have proved their worth in praxis, suggestions which offer White both active and solid play

27,90 €

Lawrence Trent: The Smith-Morra Gambit

What can be done against the Sicilian? Do you choose a main line, in the certainty that in order to achieve an opening advantage you have to have spent years working through an enormous mountain of opening theory? Or do you choose an Anti-Sicilian and concede to your opponent a slight chance of equality should you stray from the main paths? The Morra Gambit (1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3) is one of the least frequently played, but according to IM Trent one of the most under-estimated of the Anti-Sicilians. With the help of a pawn sacrifice, White aims for the fastest possible development of his pieces in order to be able to destroy the unprepared black camp with an attack. In praxis, many players with Black are, right from the start of the game, faced with the problem that they are going to be confronted with unfamiliar positions. So it will come as no surprise that approx. 50% of all players of the black pieces simply decide not to accept the gambit. But in this case too, Trent demonstrates a host of tricky ideas which enable White to achieve a game with great attacking prospects. And, last but not least, you will find on the DVD a series of theoretical innovations!

27,90 €

Alexei Shirov: Guide to the Tkachiev Ruy Lopez

The name "Tkachiev Variation" was attributed by the author of this new DVD himself. Until then the black setup (3... a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5) in the Ruy Lopez had not had a specific name, and so Shirov decided to call the variation after the European champion of 2007, Vladislav Tkachiev. In fact the grandmaster from Kazakhstan has played a series of important games with this system. But it would actually been just as justifiable to name the variation after Alexei Shirov, because not only has it belonged to his arsenal since 1996, but in recent years it has even constituted his main weapon against 1.e4. On this new DVD the supergrandmaster presents the totality of his up-to-date knowledge about this variation. Apart from the Exchange Variation, White hardly has any option to avoid the Tkachiev Variation. This makes the opening additionally attractive for those facing the Ruy Lopez with Black.

32,90 €

Alexei Shirov: The Advance Caro–Kann (2nd edition)

The Caro-Kann Defence (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5) is considered to be one of the most solid weapons against 1.e4. From the very start, Black takes up the struggle for the centre and is continually on the lookout for his chance. Alexei Shirov's favourite weapon against the solid black setup has always been the Advance Variation (3.e5), which brings to both sides chances and also risks. The main themes of the DVD are the plans after 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5. Shirov explains the essence of the variations and the ideas by means of his own games, and in addition he presents three theoretically important games by Jakovenko, Gashimov and Cheparinov. The lessons which are new in the 2nd edition concentrate above all on the variations after 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2. The total running time of the DVD is 7.5 hours. Fritztrainer DVD in English.

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NOTES BY

Magnus Carlsen

SI 33.3 – B35
Magnus Carlsen
Teimour Radjabov
Medias/Bazna 2010 (7)

This was my best game in the tournament. After an interesting tactical skirmish in the middlegame I maintained the pressure in the endgame, and it paid off, as it often does ☺.

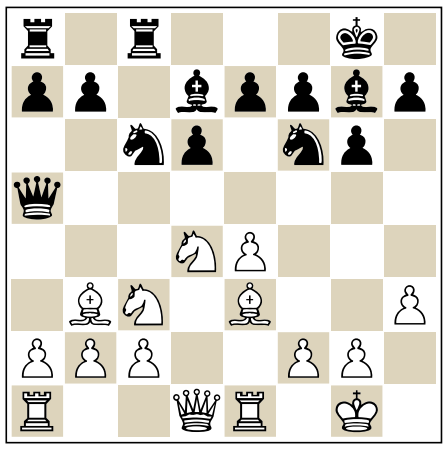
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6

Not really surprising, as Radjabov has frequently used the Dragon over the past few years.

4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗c4 ♕a5

This one, however, was rather unexpected. He refuses to transpose to the Dragon after all.

8.0-0 0-0 9.♗b3 d6 10.h3 ♗d7 11.♖e1 The other main line here is 11.f4. **11...♖fc8**



12.♕e2

Not the most common move, but I recalled the game Akopian-Bacrot, Nalchik 2009, where White was held convincingly, and so I thought it would make sense to deviate early on.

12...♕h5

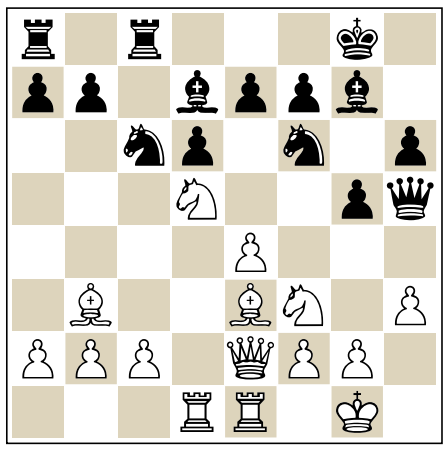
A normal manoeuvre in this line. After the queen swap Black would obviously be fine with his extremely solid structure.

13.♘f3 h6

This, in connection with his next move, is also a well established plan.

14.♖ad1 g5 15.♘d5

There really wasn't much else to do, as Black's plan of ...g5-g4 had to be countered somehow, and 15.♘d4 clearly wasn't an option.

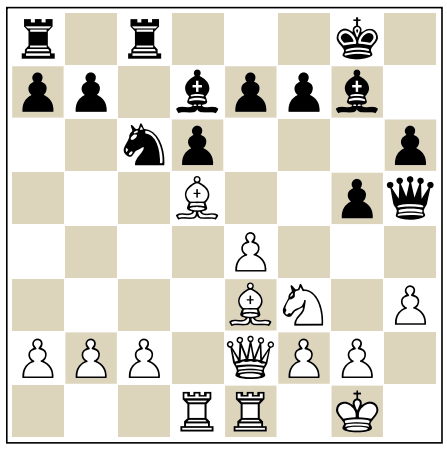


15...♘xd5

15...g4 is now met solidly by 16.♘h2. 15...♘xe4 16.♗d4! is also inadvisable. 15...♕g6 also deserves a mention, not for its merits, but for the refutation: 16.♘e5!.

16.♗xd5!

Clearly the best practical decision. I checked it for a while to make sure that I am not worse in any of the main lines. The move does not lead to an advantage for White, but it is much more challenging for Black than 16.exd5 ♘e5 17.♘xe5 ♕xe2 18.♖xe2 ♗xe5, which was actually played in an earlier game Bologan-Malakhov, France 2006. In fact, Black might even have a slight initiative here, as he has a clear plan of pushing the queenside pawns, and 19.♗d4 can even be met by 19...f6!?.



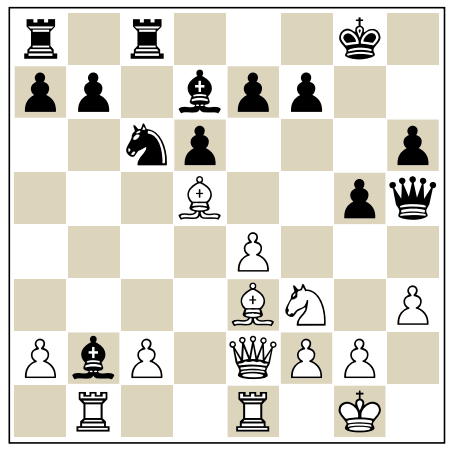
16...♗xb2

Clearly the best move, but as he spent quite a bit of time on it, his first real think in the game, I felt quite good about my chances nevertheless.

The alternative 16...e6 17.♗xc6 (17.♗b3 ♗xb2 18.♖xd6 ♗e8 is probably okay for Black) 17...♗xc6 18.♗d4 e5 (18...♗f8 19.c4, with a white edge) 19.♗c3 should leave White with some advantage, as the many weaknesses in the black position should be worth the price of giving Black the bishop pair.

17.♖b1

17.♕b5 is harmless, as Black has the pleasant choice of 17...♗e5 18.♕xb7 ♗xh3 19.gxh3 ♕xf3 20.♗xc6 ♕xh3 21.♕d7 g4 22.f4! ♕g3+, with a perpetual. 17...♗f6 18.♕xb7 ♗e8 is the other decent option, when Black should have a good game due to my relatively misplaced queen.



17...♗c3!

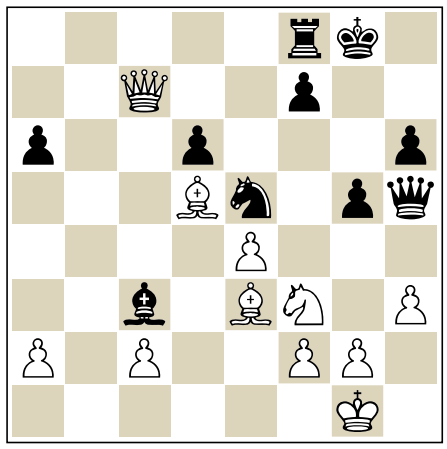
Once again, the sharpest move is also the best.

17...♗f6 18.♖xb7 ♗e8 19.♕a6 gives White the initiative due to the neat trick 19...e6 20.♖xa7! (20.♗b3 is probably better for White as well) 20...♘xa7 21.♗xa8 ♖xa8 22.♗xa7.

18.♖xb7 ♗xh3

18...♗xe1 was the obvious alternative, and the one I had calculated the most, of course, as it at least temporarily wins an exchange. In the end it should probably lead to a draw: 19.♖xd7 ♗c3 20.♕b5 a6 (a useful zwischenzug – 20...♘e5

gives White the extra option of 21.♖xe7 ♖ab8 22.♕f1!, retaining my active rook and clearly the better chances) 21.♕b6 ♘e5 22.♖xe7 ♖ab8 23.♖b7 ♖xb7 24.♕xb7 ♖f8 25.♕c7,

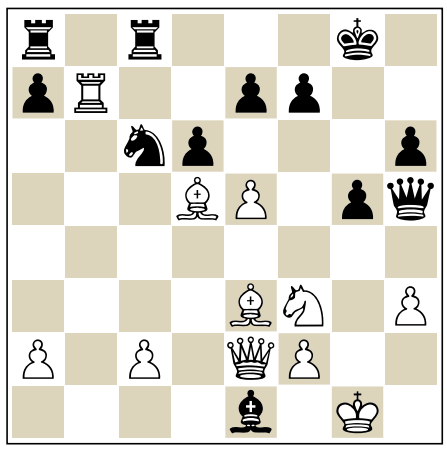


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and here I concluded that White would at least not be worse after 25...♘xf3+ 26.gxf3 ♗e5 27.♔g2. In fact, White might be a bit better here, as my bishops are really powerful. However, 25...g4!, as pointed out by the engines, ruins things a bit: 26.hxg4 ♕xg4 27.♔f1 (27.♘h2 ♕d1+ 28.♘f1 ♕g4 leads to the same result) 27...♗b4! 28.c3 ♘xf3 29.gxf3 ♕xf3, and as often happens in chess, perpetual check is the logical result in the end.

19.♘xg5

I spent quite a bit of time on this one, as I really wanted to make the tempting 19.gxh3 ♗xe1 20.e5 work. Unfortunately, it leads nowhere.



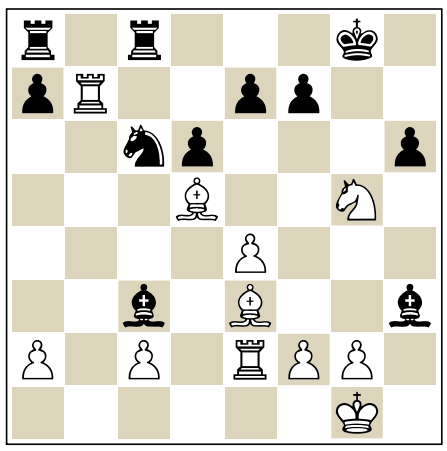
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 20...e6 21.♗xe6 was my main point, which would lead to an elegant draw: 21...♘xe5 (the only move – 21...fxe6 22.♕d3 and wins) 22.♘xe5 ♕xe2 23.♗xf7+ ♔h8. The only move that doesn't lose immediately, but enough to force me to give perpetual check: 24.♘g6+ ♔h7 (the only one – 24...♔g7 25.♗d4+ ♕e5 26.♘xe5 dxe5 27.♗xe5+ ♔f8 28.♗e6, and the white attacking forces are way too strong: 28...♖xc2 29.♗d6+ ♔e8 30.♖g7 ♗xf2+ 31.♔f1, and mates!) 25.♗e8+ ♔g8 (the only move) 26.♗f7+, with a draw;

B) But after the simple 20...♘xe5 21.♖xe7 ♗c3! White has already run out of steam.

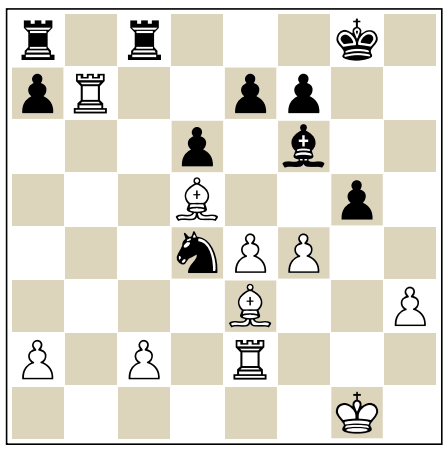
19...♕xe2 20.♖xe2

I still had hopes of retaining an initiative here, but after his next move, made after a considerable amount of thought, those hopes were more or less dashed. In general, I felt that we both handled the complications that started on move 16 very well.



20...♗g4!

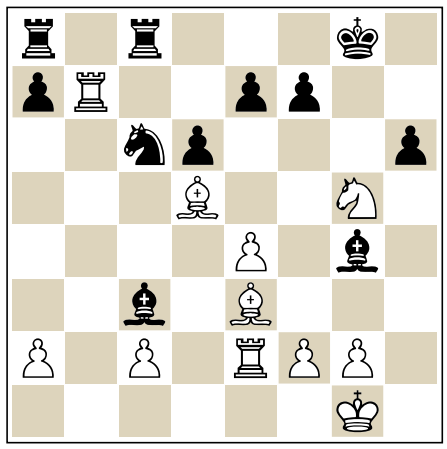
20...hxg5 21.gxh3 ♗f6 22.f4 ♘d4, and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 23.♖f2!? is what I was counting on. Even though Black should still make a draw here, White has some chances, as 23...♘xc2 24.fxg5 ♘xe3 25.gxf6 ♘xd5 26.exd5 does not seem to be a certain draw yet, although a few more good moves will probably do the job for Black;

B) 23.♖g2 also forces some accurate play from Black: 23...♘xc2 24.♗d2 e6 25.♗b3 ♘d4 26.fxg5 ♗d8! (26...♗e5 27.g6 f6 28.h4 is not a good idea for Black) 27.g6 ♖c7 28.♖xc7 ♗xc7 29.gxf7+ ♔xf7, and Black is relatively safe.



21.♘f3

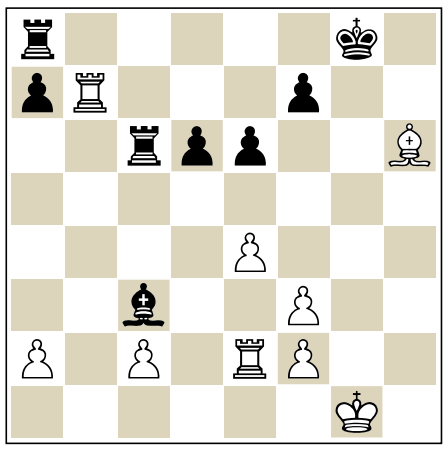
Retreating is the only way to continue the fight, though with limited hope of success.

21.♘xf7 is why I thought that 20...♗g4 wouldn't work: 21...♗xe2 22.♘e5+ (22.♘xd6+ ♔h8 23.♘xc8 ♖xc8 is obviously not a very bright winning attempt), and now every move but one would lead to the complete collapse of the black position. Check for yourselves! 22...♔h8! is once again the only move, and once again entirely sufficient. I had missed this little detail in my preliminary calculations: 23.♘xc6 e6. This is the (relatively obvious) point, which would not have been possible after any other king move. Now White is lucky to have a bailout with 24.♘e7 exd5 25.♘g6+, with a perpetual.

21...e6 22.♗xc6 ♖xc6 23.♗xh6 ♗xf3 24.gxf3

PETER DOGGERS

Carlsen-Radjabov: 'After an interesting tactical skirmish in the middlegame I maintained the pressure in the endgame, and it paid off, as it often does ☺.'

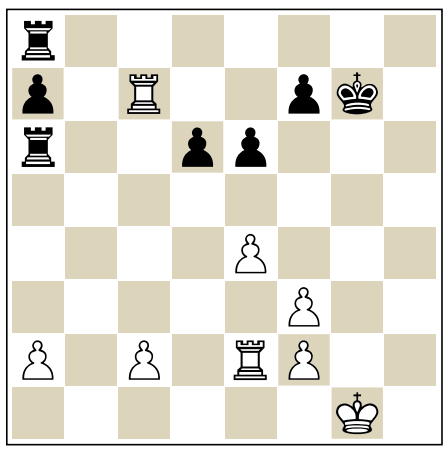


24...♖a6

A very reasonable approach, steering the game towards a rook ending that is almost certainly drawn. 24...a5, preparing ...♖ac8, would also have been a decent idea, as 25.f4 ♗g7 looks like a slightly improved version of the game.

25.♖c7 ♗g7 26.♗xg7 ♔xg7

On the other hand, I felt obliged to try at least a little with my extra pawn and therefore nominal advantage. I was encouraged by the fact that he had spent quite a bit of time on the preceding complications and had about 15 minutes left here. Although this is not really time-trouble, it is not completely comfortable either if the position is just a little complicated. Additionally, Gelfand looked set to beat Nisipeanu, and the prospect of a one-point lead instead of half a point was not really discouraging.

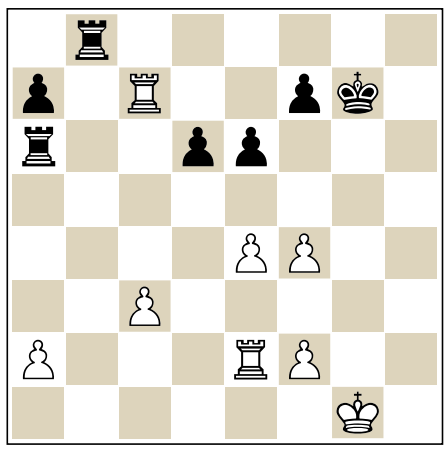


27.c3!?

It might look weird to move the pawn one square instead of two, but I thought I was being quite clever, as I would probably play f4 at some point anyway. Then it might be a good thing that once the c-pawn was captured in some lines, the e4-f4 pawn pair would not be in danger as well.

27...♖b8 28.f4

The only way to play for a win is to create threats to his king at some point. The text prepares ♖e3-g3, as well as e4-e5.



28...♖bb6

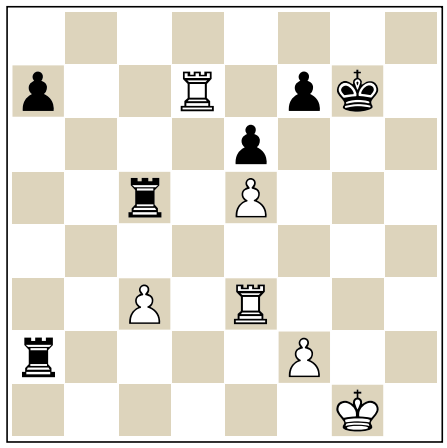
Preparing a rook exchange with ...♖c6, when it would be a certain draw.

28...♖b1+ 29.♔g2 ♖a1 30.♖b2 ♖b6 31.♖d2 ♖a6 32.♖d3 would be very similar to the game.

29.♖d7 The only way to continue to play for a win.

29...♖c6 30.♖e3 ♖xa2 31.e5 dxe5 32.fxe5 ♖c5?!

Playing right up my street. 32...♔g6! 33.♖f3 ♖c5 34.♖fxf7 ♖xe5 35.♖xa7 ♖xa7 36.♖xa7 ♖c5 37.♖a3 ♔f5 would have brought the game to its logical conclusion.



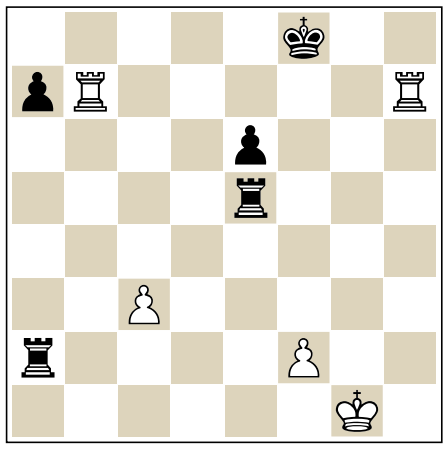
33.♖g3+!

Now Black is forced to the eighth rank, as 33...♔h6?? 34.♖d8 ♔h7 35.♖d4 would have meant an inglorious end for Black.

33...♔f8 34.♖f3 ♖xe5 35.♖fxf7+ ♔e8

However, it's still a draw.

36.♖fe7+ ♔f8 37.♖h7 ♔g8 38. ♖dg7+ ♔f8 39.♖b7

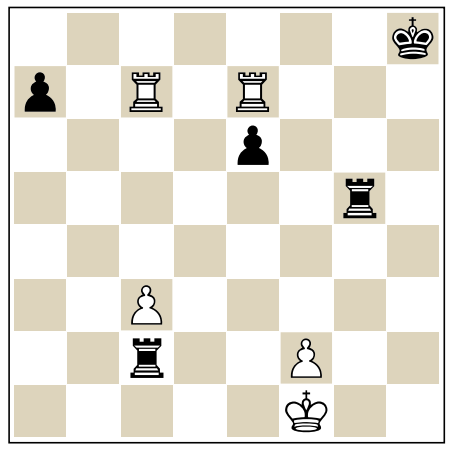


39...♔g8?!

Now Black's task has become very complicated indeed. 39...♖g5+ 40.♔f1 ♔g8 41.♖xa7 (41.♖he7 ♖f5!) 41...♖xa7 42.♖xa7 ♖c5 43.♖a3 ♔f7 44.♔e2 ♔f6 45.♔d3 ♖d5+ was still a relatively straightforward draw.

40.♖hg7+ ♔h8 41.♖ge7 ♖g5+

42.♔f1 ♖c2 43.♖bc7

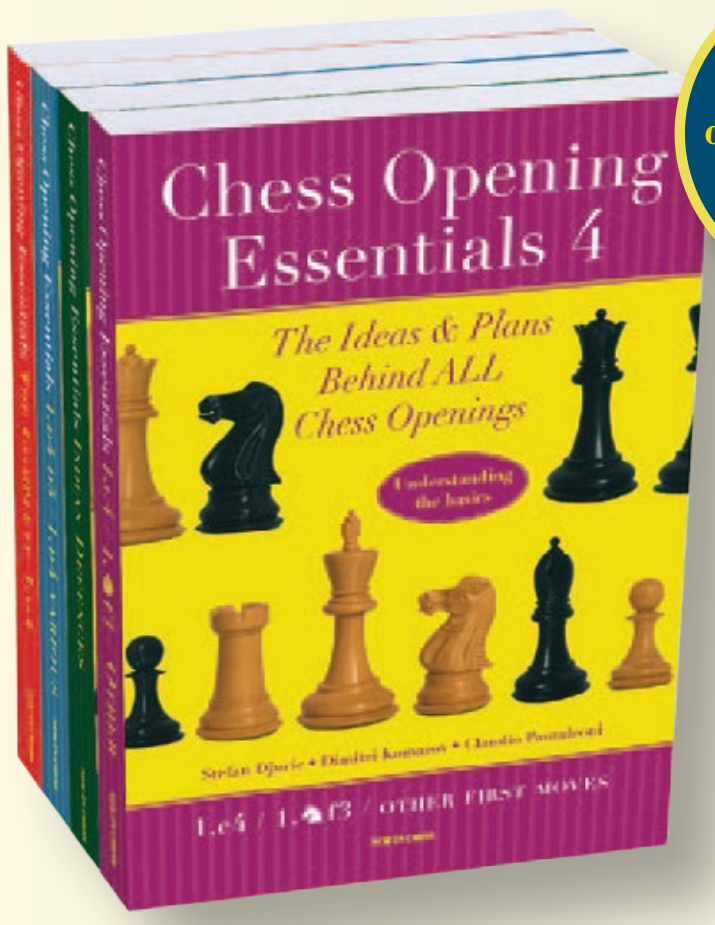


43...a5?

This seems to me to be the decisive mistake. He could probably still have held the position with 43...♖g6! 44.♖e8+ ♖g8 45.♖xe6 ♖f8, which is the big difference compared to the game: 46.♖e2 ♖c1+ 47.♔g2 ♖g8+ 48.♔f3 ♖g7. It is hard to say whether this is winning for White or not, but my feeling is that it is closer to a draw than to a win for White.

44.♖xe6 a4 45.♖a6

'The reader receives enough strategic knowledge and insider-tips to get into the middlegame safely.'
Europa Rochade Magazine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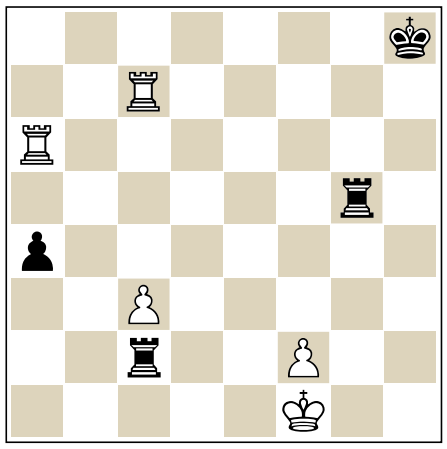


45...♖g4

45...♖g7 is probably what he had been counting on, but after the accurate 46.♖h6+! ♔g8 47.♖c8+ ♔f7 48.♖a6 Black is still in a real bind, as the g7 rook cannot move due to ♖c7+ and ♖a8, with mate: 48...♖a2 49.c4 a3 50.c5 ♖a1+ 51.♔e2 a2 52.♔f3, and White should win.

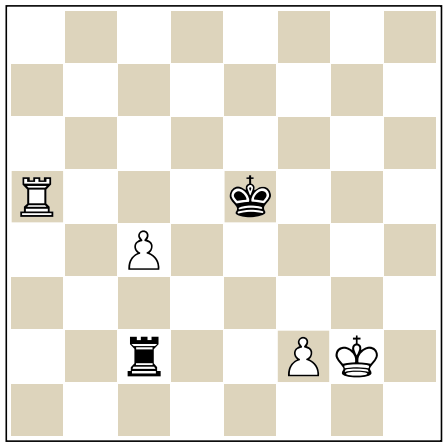
46.c4

It goes without saying that this pawn cannot be taken by either rook due to the check on a8.

46...♖g7 47.♖xg7 ♔xg7 48.♖xa4

This is a technical win.

48...♔f6 49.♔g2 ♔e5 50.♖a5+!



My only problem was the passive rook on a4. Now it will be activated either in front of or to the side of the c4 pawn.

50...♔e6

After 50...♔f4 White wins with 51.♖c5. And 50...♔d4 51.♖d5+! ♔xc4 52.♖d8 cuts off the king and wins easily: 52...♖a2 53.♔g3 ♖a7 54.f4 ♖g7+ 55.♔f3 ♖f7 56.♔g4 ♖g7+ 57.♔f5, and White wins.

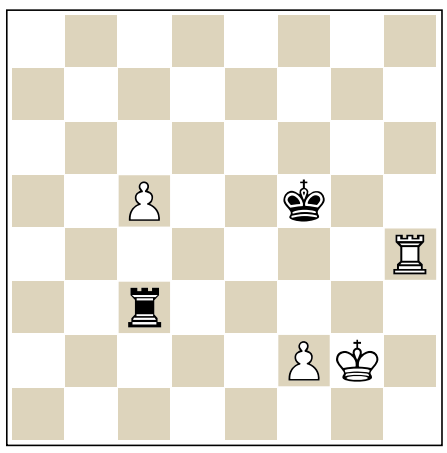
51.♖c5 ♔d6 52.♖d5+ ♔e6 53.♖d4 ♔e5 54.♖h4 ♖c3 55.c5

PETER DOGGERS

Magnus Carlsen has won three Grand Slam tournaments in a row. For the moment there's just no stopping him.

Taking this chance to advance the pawn. The pawn endings are always won.

55...♔f5

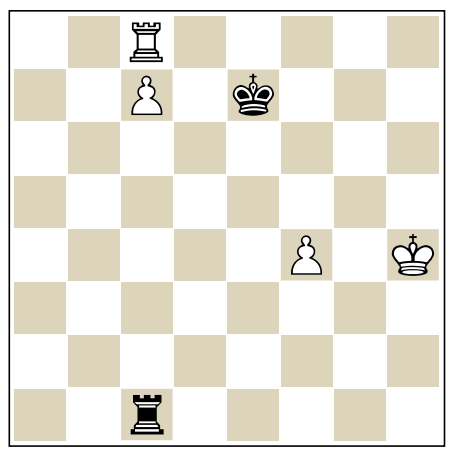


56.♖h8! The most accurate.

56...♔f4 57.♖c8 ♔e5 58.c6 ♔d6 59.f3

Preparing ♔g3 and ♔g4, followed by f4 and so forth.

59...♖c5 60.♔g3 ♖g5+ 61.♔h4 ♖g1 62.f4 ♔e7 63.c7 ♖c1



Setting a final trap.

63...♔d7 64.♖d8+ ♔xc7 65.♖d2, and White wins easily.

64.♔g5

Black resigned.

64.♖h8 or 64.♖g8 was not to be recommended!

"I know . . ."

SILVIO DANAILOV

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NOTES BY

Teimour Radjabov

RG 6.5 – C42
Teimour Radjabov
Boris Gelfand
Medias/Bazna 2010 (4)

As this game concerns a win against the Petroff, it will of course be analysed by commentators and GMs, on their sites and in home preparations. But I will try to give my own opinion on this game against Boris Gelfand, whose main opening against 1.e4 is the Petroff these days.

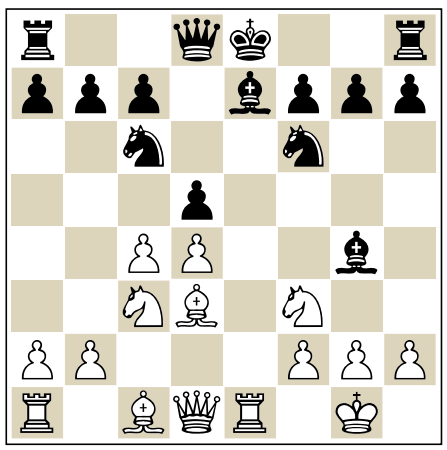
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

The Petroff, which former Soviet players tend to call the Russian Defence ☺. That's right, as even nowadays the highest player who uses it is from Russia (Vladimir Kramnik, in case you couldn't guess).

3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♖e1

We also played this system last year in the same tournament, so there is nothing new under the sun.

8...♗g4 9.c4 ♘f6 10.♘c3



10...♗xf3

In a few games 10...♘xd4 11.cxd5 was seen, with an interesting fight.

11.♕xf3 ♘xd4 12.♕d1 ♘e6

And here I have gone 13.cxd5 ♘xd5, and now 14.♗b5+. There are a lot of games with this sequence, including my game against Gelfand from Bazna 2009.

13.♗f5

Now there are many moves. Boris went 13...d4 against Morozevich. This time he decides to change.

13...c6 13...dxc4 is another line that was seen in many other games.

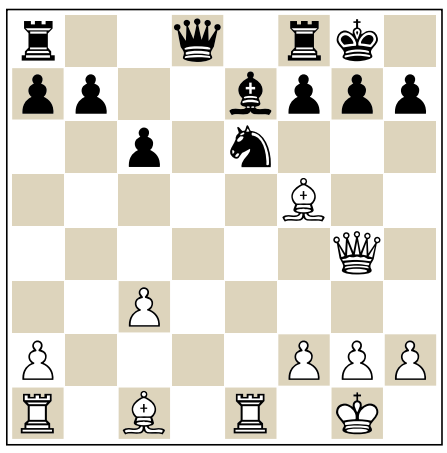
14.cxd5 ♘xd5 15.♕g4 ♘xc3

After a relatively short think Boris went for this exchange.

A possible alternative to the text is 15...0-0, when White has several possibilities.

16.bxc3 16.♗xe6 leads at best to a transposition of moves, as after 16...fxe6 White has nothing else than 17.bxc3.

16...0-0



17.♖b1!?

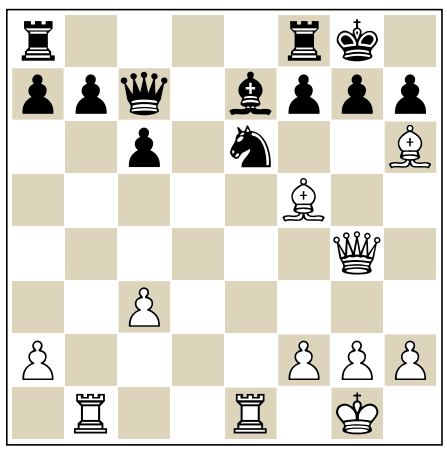
Attacking b7. Now defending this pawn is not so easy, as after 17...♕d7?? White wins on the spot with 18.♖xe6.

17...♕c7

The most logical move, connecting rooks and defending b7.

18.♗h6!

Alternatively, 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.♕xe6+ ♖f7 20.g3 ♗f6 21.♗f4 ♕d7 22.♕b3 would give White a slight but probably inconvertible plus.



18...♗d6??

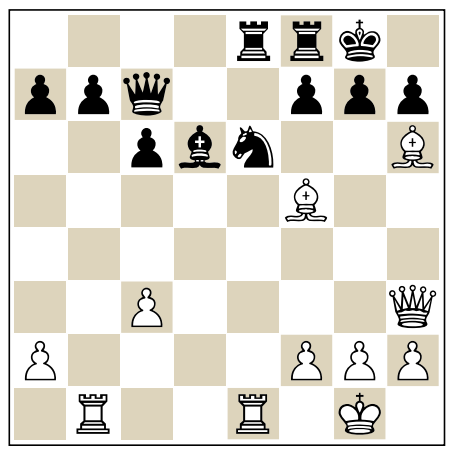
The fatal mistake. That's what we can call it now. But it doesn't *look* that way. At the first glance it's impossible to see that this move loses by force, yet White turns out to be winning after it. This makes it Black's only mistake in the game, despite the fact that it's the first line of many engines for a long time.

The only move was 18...♗f6, when after 19.♕h3 ♖fe8 20.♗xh7+ ♔f8 White has a few ways to keep the initiative, e.g. 21.♗d2 ♖ad8 22.♗d3 ♕d7 23.♖e3!, and the queen goes to h7.

19.♕h3!

19.♕h4 might have been possible too, but I like the queen on h3 somehow, as it doesn't allow moves like ...♕d8 or ...♕e7, attacking the queen on h4.

19...♖fe8 The alternative was 19...♖ae8, and now:

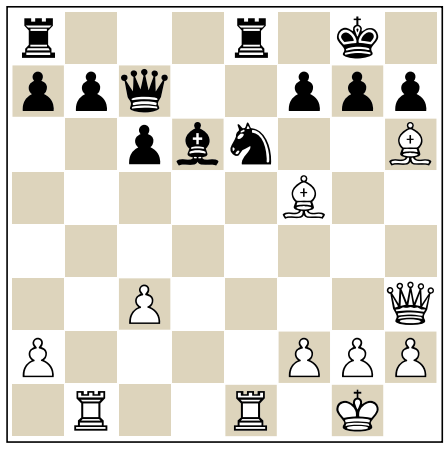


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 20.g4! strengthens the bishop on f5. White keeps the initiative: 20...gxh6 (otherwise Black has to give the exchange with 20...g6) 21.♕xh6 f6 22.♗xe6+ ♔h8 23.♖e4. It is hard to keep this position in a practical game. White presses and attacks in quite a simple manner due to the opposite-coloured bishops;

B) Clearly weaker is 20.♖bd1?! ♘c5 21.♗xg7 ♗xh2+ (Black loses after 21...♖xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♔xg7 23.♕xh7+ ♔f6 24.h4) 22.♔h1 ♔xg7 23.g3 ♖xe1+ (23...♗xg3 24.♖g1, and wins) 24.♖xe1 ♗xg3 25.♕xh7+ ♔f6 26.♗h3 ♕f4 27.fxg3 ♕g5, with equality;

C) 20.♖e4 also wins, but it's more technical. The rook goes to h4, when White is close to winning.



20.♗xg7! They say that you shouldn't believe your engines ☺. They indicate that this move leads to a draw, but come on...

20...♗xh2+ If 20...♔xg7 then 21.♕xh7+ ♔f6 22.♕h6+ ♔xf5 23.h3, and White wins. But 22.♗xe6 also works.

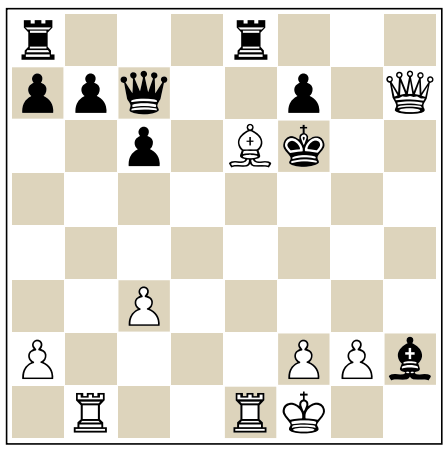
21.♔f1! This simply wins! Now there is no longer a pin on the h-file and Black is just lost.

21.♔h1 ♔xg7 22.♕xh7+ ♔f6 23.♗xe6 ♖h8 24.♕f5+ ♔g7 25.♕g5+ ♔f8 26.♗h3 is also good for White, but it's much less strong than the game continuation, as the bishop is pinned on the h-file.

21...♔xg7

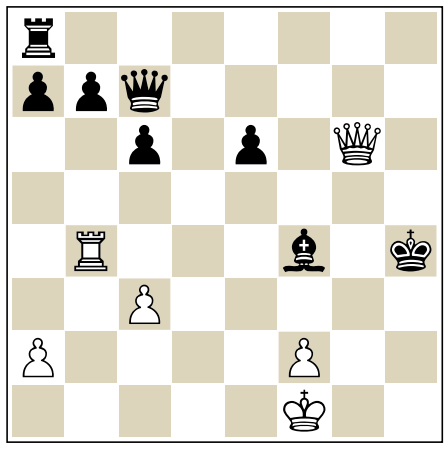
The alternatives are no better: 21...♕a5 22.♕xh7 mate. After 21...♘g5 22.♕h6 ♕a5 23.♗d3! the bishops protect everything and help each other too: 23...♕d5 24.♗d4, and Black is lost.

22.♕xh7+ ♔f6 23.♗xe6



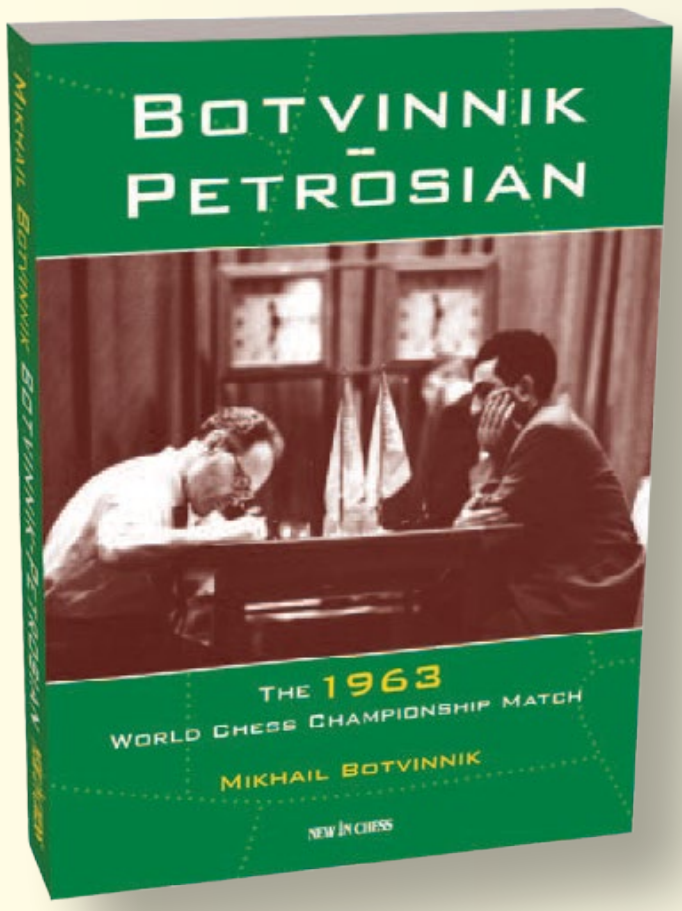
23...♗f4

Boris makes the only move. After 23...♖xe6 24.♕h6+ ♔f5 (24...♔e7 25.♖xe6+ fxe6 26.♖xb7 ♕xb7 27.♕h7+, and White captures everything and wins, being a queen up) 25.♖xe6 fxe6 26.g4+ ♔xg4 (or 26...♔e4 27.♕e3+ ♔d5 28.♕d4 mate) 27.♕g6+ ♔f3 (27...♔h4 28.♖b4+ ♗f4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

29.♕g3+ – in fact, the sadistic 29.f3 is White's best move – 29...♔h5 30.♖xf4, and it's time to resign)



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PETER DOGGERS

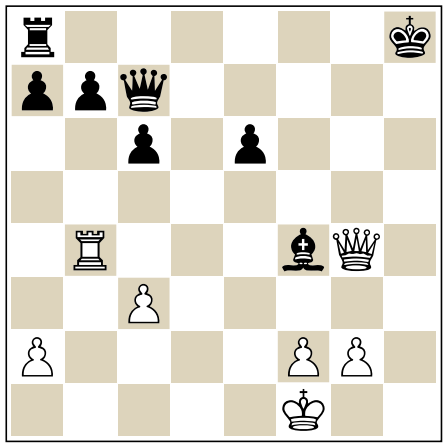
Teimour Radjabov: 'They say that you shouldn't believe your engines ☺. They indicate that this move leads to a draw, but come on...'

28.♖b4, and mate is threatened from everywhere.

24.♕f5+ ♔g7 25.♖b4! ♖xe6

Or 25...♗h6 26.♖g4+ ♔f8 27.♕f6, and wins.

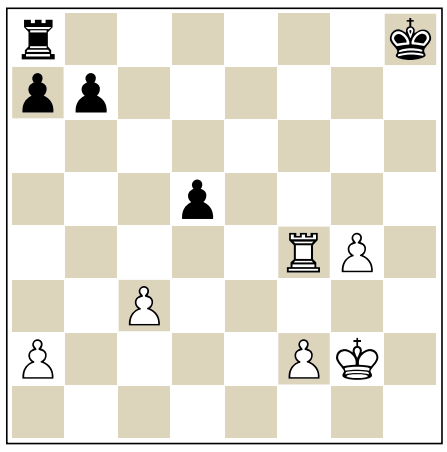
26.♖xe6 fxe6 27.♕g4+ ♔h8



28.♖xf4 Cybernetically speaking, 28.♕h4+ was easier: 28...♕h7 29.♕f6+ ♔g8 (29...♕g7 30.♕xf4) 30.♖xf4 ♕b1+ 31.♔e2 ♕c2+ 32.♔e3 ♕c1+ 33.♔f3 ♕d1+ 34.♔g3 ♕d3+ 35.f3, and wins.

28...♕h7 29.♕xe6 ♕h1+

29...♕b1+ 30.♕e1, with a hopeless endgame for Black. **30.♔e2 ♕h5+ 31.g4 ♕b5+ 32.♔f3 ♕d3+ 33.♔g2 ♕d5+ 34.♕xd5 cxd5**



35.♖f7! The most technical way to win. **35...b5 36.♖d7** 36.♖c7 was even easier. **36...a6 37.f4 ♖c8 38. f5** And here Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Boris Gelfand

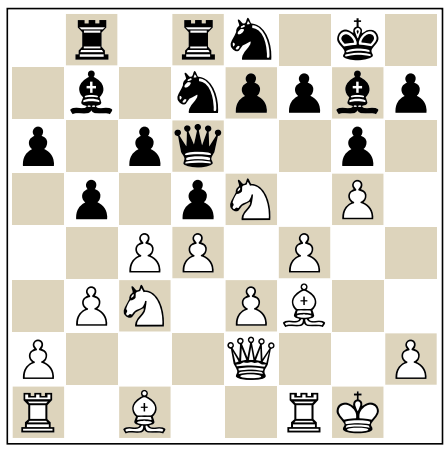
SL 3.1 – D15
Boris Gelfand
Wang Yue
Medias/Bazna 2010 (1)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6

Over the last few months this was my third meeting with Wang Yue. In the first two games he tried 4... g6, but both times I got an advantage from the opening. So it came as no surprise that he decided to play another line.

5.♘f3 b5 6.c5

The first time I met the Chebanenko system was back in 1990. I'll include this game in these annotations, as I showed similar ideas to the ones in this game: 6.b3 g6 7.♗e2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘e5 ♗b7 10.f4 ♕d6 11.♗f3 ♘bd7 12.♕e2 ♖ab8 13.g4 ♖fd8 14.g5 ♘e8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

15.♕g2 bxc4 16.bxc4 e6 17.♖b1 ♗a8 18.c5 ♕e7 19.♗d2 ♖xb1 20. ♖xb1 ♖b8 21.♖xb8 ♘xb8 22.♘a4 ♗b7 23.♗a5 ♗xe5 24.dxe5 ♘c7 25.♘b2 ♘b5 26.a4 ♕xc5 (White would also be winning after 26... ♘a3 27.♗b4 ♘c4 28.♘xc4 dxc4) 27.axb5 ♕xe3+ 28.♕f2 ♕xf4 29. ♗d2 ♕xe5 30.♘d3 ♕f5 31.♕a7 ♘d7 32.♘e1 ♗c8 33.♕c7 1-0, Gelfand-Hort, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990.

6...g6 7.♘e5 ♗g7 8.f4 a5

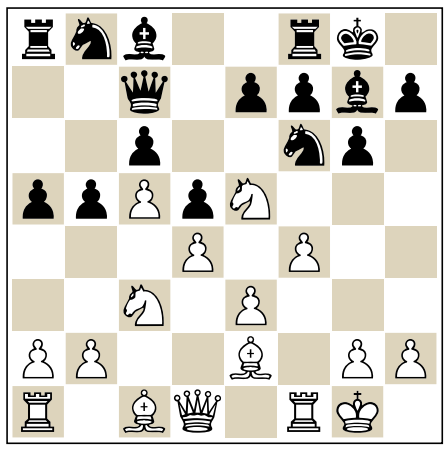
My opponent tried this plan twice

against Bacrot, and both times he had no problems from the opening.

9.♗e2

Wang Yue drew against Bacrot in Elista 2008 after 9.♗d3 ♗f5 10.♗xf5 gxf5 11.♗d2 e6 12.♕e2 h5 13.0-0-0 b4 14.♘a4 ♘e4 15.♘b6 ♖a7 16.♘d3 ♘d7 17.♘xd7 ♔xd7 18.♖dg1 ♕b8.

9...♕c7 10.0-0 0-0



11.a3!

This is a new and important idea. I had been waiting a couple of years for a chance to use it. I had analysed my game against Bareev together with Alexander Khuzman and had realized that e4 is the key square in such positions.

Wang Yue made another draw against Bacrot at the 2008 Dresden Olympiad after 11.♗d3 ♗f5 12.♗xf5 gxf5 13.♗d2 ♘bd7 14.♗e1 e6 15.♖f3 ♘e4 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♖h3 ♖fe8 18.♘xd7 ♕xd7 19.♕h5 h6 20.♗h4 ♖a7 21.♖g3 ♔h7 22.♗g5 ♖h8 23.♕h4 ♕e8 24.♗f6 ♗xf6 25.♕xf6 ♖g8 26.♖xg8 ♕xg8 27.♔f2 ♖d7 28.♖g1 ♕d8 29.♕xd8 ♖xd8 30.g4 fxg4 31.♖xg4 f5.

11...♗e6

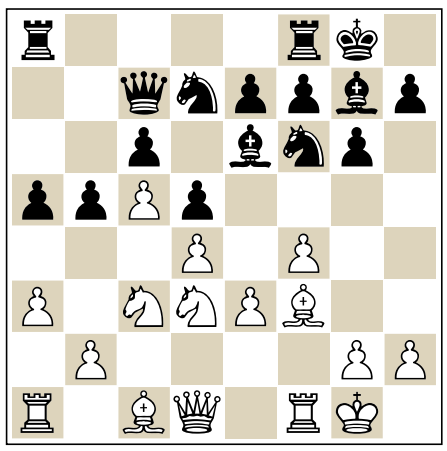
If 11...♘e4 then 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.a4 b4 14.♕c2, keeping an advantage.

12.♗f3

Taking control of the e4-square.

12...♘bd7 13.♘d3!

It goes without saying that White avoids all exchanges, as Black's pieces are very cramped and don't have enough space.



13...h6?!

Faced with a new plan, my opponent thought for a long time and decided to build 'a wall'.

I would have gone for 13...♗f5, trying to exchange the poor bishop.

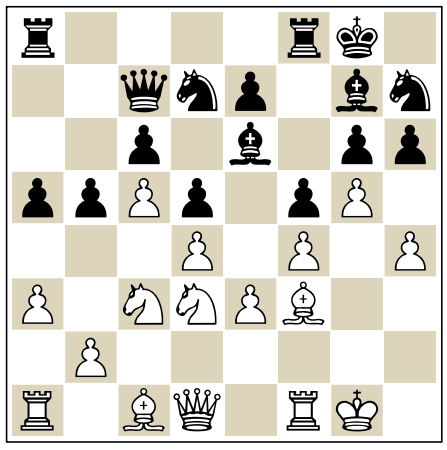
14.g4!

It was easy to let the advantage slip. After 14.♗d2 ♗f5 15.♘f2 g5 Black has nothing to worry about.

14...♘h7

As 14...h5 15.h3 hxg4 16.hxg4 g5 17.♔g2 just plays into White's hand.

15.h4 f5 16.g5



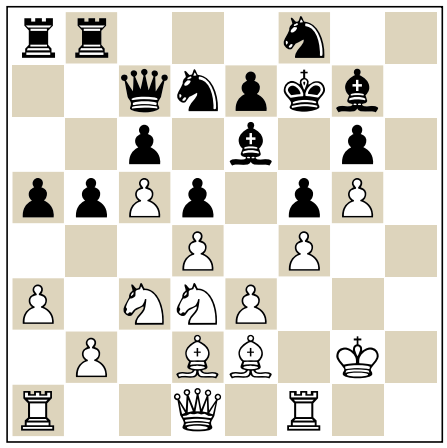
16...hxg5

During the game I thought that 16...h5 would be even worse, as h5 becomes a target and White will sacrifice a knight on h5 under favourable circumstances, e.g. 17.♘e2 ♗f7 18.♘g3 e6 19.♗d2 ♖fb8 20.♘xh5 gxh5 21.♗xh5. However, now things don't seem so clear to me, as Black would sac a piece, let's say with 21...♗xh5 22.♕xh5 ♘df6 23.gxf6 ♘xf6 with good defending chances.

17.hxg5

So White has won some more space. The pawns on c5 and g5 are restricting Black's pieces to the last two ranks. The next step of White's plan is to regroup his pieces. Black has no counterplay whatsoever and will have to wait.

17...♔f7 18.♔g2 ♖fb8 19.♗d2 ♘hf8 20.♗e2

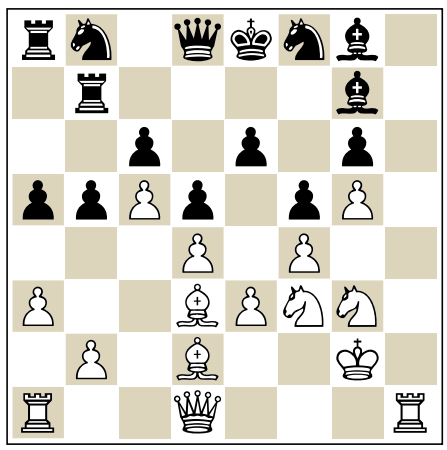


The bishop is going to d3 and the knights to f3 and g3.

20...♔e8 21.♘e1 ♗g8 22.♘f3 ♖b7 23.♗d3 ♘b8 24.♘e2 ♕d8 25.♘g3

White is threatening a sacrifice on f5 and Black is forced to play ...e6.

25...e6 26.♖h1



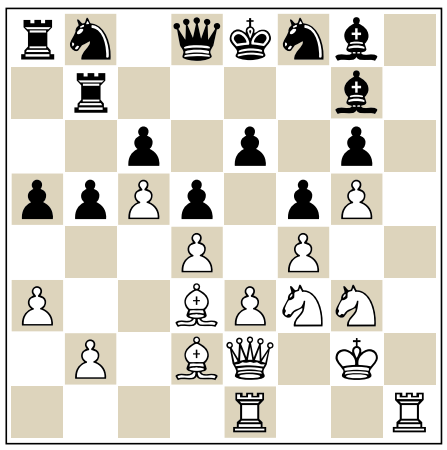
26...♗h7?

Black wanted to hide his king on g8, but this allows White a strong regrouping. I still believe that waiting passively was Black's best option.

Here I was looking for a plan to break through in case Black decided to simply wait and see. It seems possible that a piece sac connected with e3-e4 would work, e.g. 26...♘bd7 27.♕e2 ♘b8 28.♖ae1

PETER DOGGERS

Boris Gelfand finally got to use an idea he had found a couple of years ago.



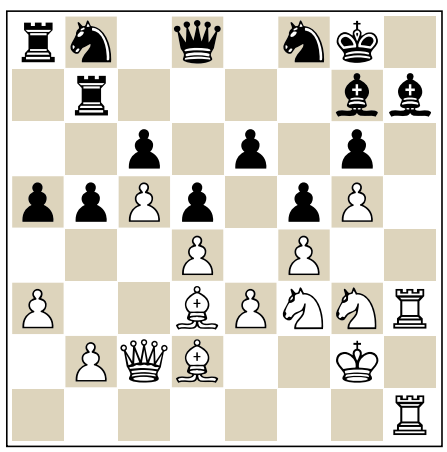
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

28...♘bd7 (probably better is 28...♖e7. However, it is difficult for Black to defend against all his opponent's ideas. White wants to play ♗c3, ♕d2, ♘e2-c1-b3, forcing a4, when he can play e3-e4 in favourable circumstances: he can take the knight to e5 via d3, etc. 29.♗c3 ♕c7 30.♕d2 ♘bd7) 29.e4 fxe4 30.♗xe4 dxe4 31.♘xe4, with the plan of ♘d6 and ♘e5. Another plan would be to move the knight to d3, ♕e1, plan a4 and sac a knight on b4 after b5-b4, followed by an advance of the b-pawn. However, it is very hard to say whether White's advantage is enough for victory.

27.♕c2 ♔f7 28.♖h3

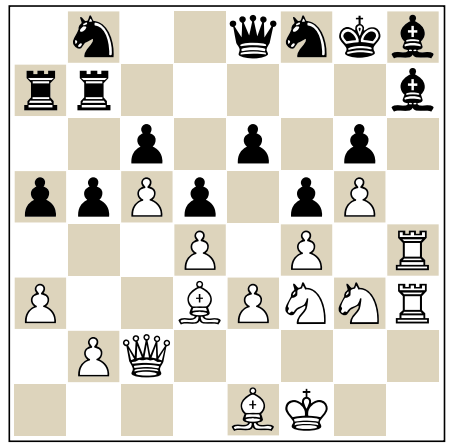
There is no need to even consider the e3-e4 breakthrough, as White has a better plan at his disposal.

28...♔g8 29.♖ah1



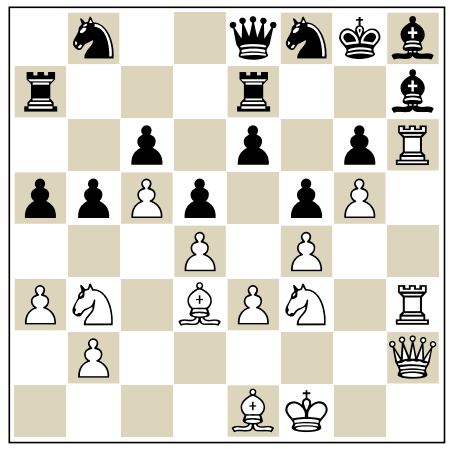
Now the bishop cannot return to g8.

29...♖aa7 30.♔f1 ♕e8 31.♗e1 ♗h8 32.♖h6 ♗g7 33.♖6h4 ♗h8 34.♖1h3



White is tripling his heavy artillery on the h-file based on Alekhine's advice: first the rooks, then the queen behind them.

34...♖e7 35.♕h2 ♖eb7 36.♖h6 ♖e7 37.♘e2 ♖eb7 38.♘c1 ♖e7 39.♘b3

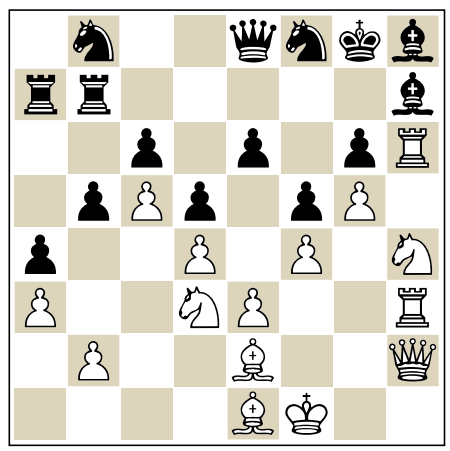


It is important to force Black to play ...a4, as it gives White the b4-square and the possibility to open the position by b3, if necessary. Even though the main action will most likely take place on the kingside, you should never neglect such a detail.

39...a4

Or 39...♕d8 40.♕d2! a4 41.♘c1.

40.♘c1 ♖eb7 41.♗e2 ♖e7 42.♘d3 ♖eb7 43.♘h4!



White has placed his pieces ideally. It is time to go for the attack!

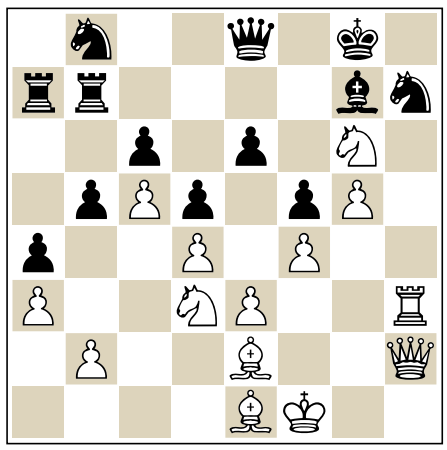
43...♗g7

Or 43...♖e7 44.♘xg6 ♘xg6 45.♗h5 ♗g7 (45...♖g7 46.♘e5) 46.♗xg6 ♗xg6 47.♖h8+, and White wins. On 43...♘bd7 White crashes through with 44.♘xg6.

44.♖xh7! ♘xh7

Weaker is 44...♔xh7? 45.♘xg6+ ♔g8 46.♖h8+ ♔f7 47.♘de5+ ♗xe5 48.♘xe5+, and wins.

45.♘xg6



45...♘d7!

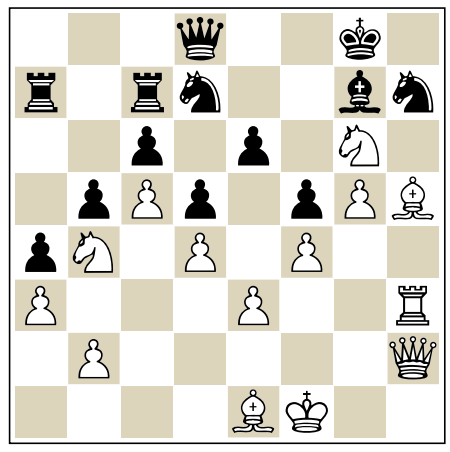
The only defence. 45...♕xg6? loses on the spot to 46.♗h5. 45...♗xd4 runs into 46.exd4 ♕xg6 47.♘e5 ♕g7 48.♖h6.

46.♗h5 ♕d8

Or 46...♘df8 47.♘xf8 ♕xf8 48.♗f3, winning the knight.

47.♘b4 ♖c7

If 47...♘b8 48.♘e5 ♗xe5 49.dxe5 ♖g7 50.g6 ♘f8 51.♗h4 ♕e8 52.♗f6, with an easy win.



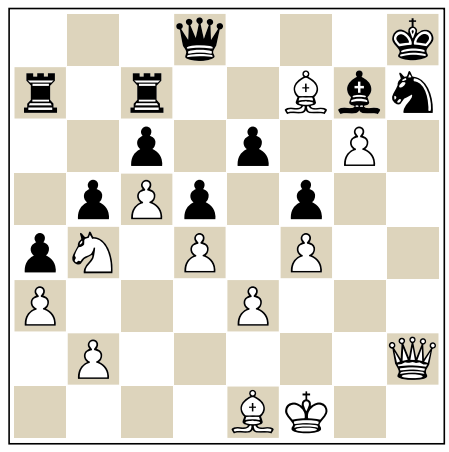
48.♘h8!!

A beautiful way to launch the final attack. I got really excited when I saw this possibility. Strangely enough, no engine on my computer indicates it even at a depth of around 20 ply.

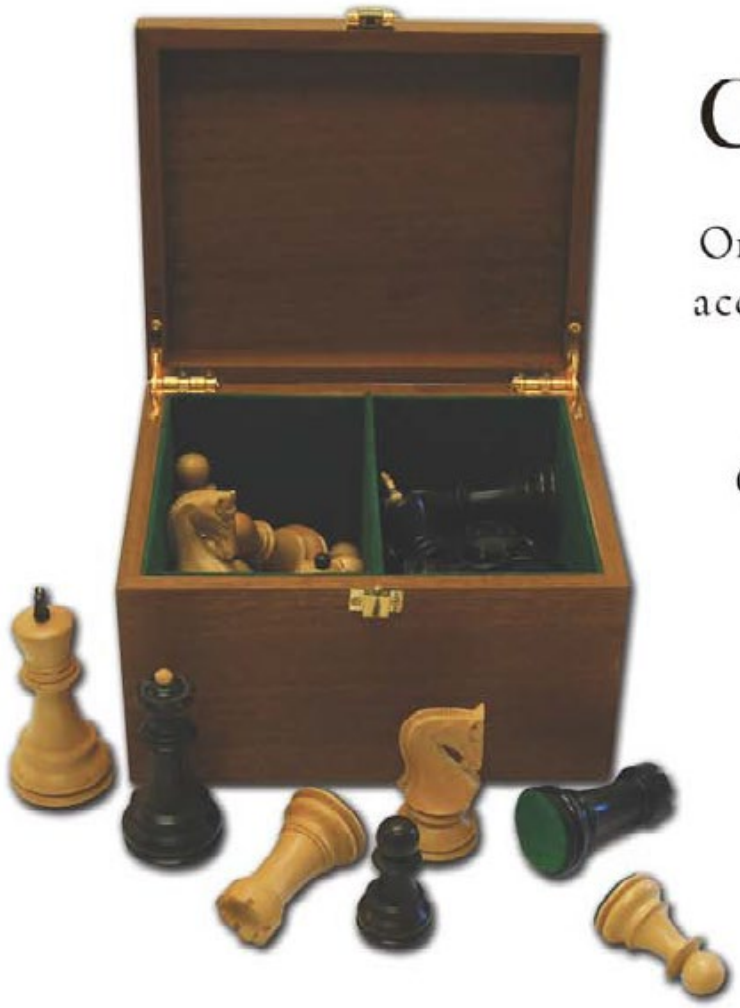
I was also thinking about 48.♘e5, but I was not sure how to make progress after 48...♘xe5 49.dxe5 ♘f8 50.♘c2 ♘d7 51.♗b4 ♕e7 52.♘d4.

48...♘df8

I believe that the most stubborn approach would have been 48...♔xh8 49.♗f7 (49.♗g6 ♘f8) 49...♘f8 50.♖xh7+! ♘xh7 51.g6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM



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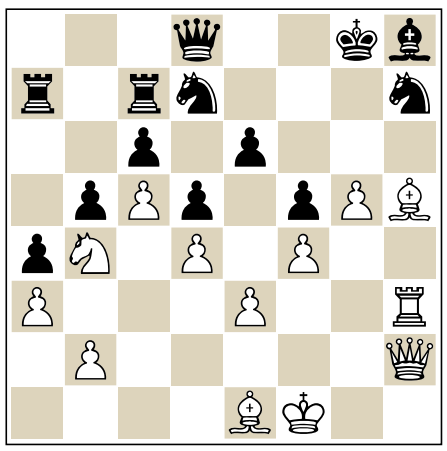
PETER DOGGERS

A view of the town of Bazna from the Bazna Balneary Complex Expro where the players and guests were staying.

51...♗h6! (the only defence) 52.♕xh6 ♖xf7 53.gxf7 ♖xf7 54.♘xc6, and despite being an exchange down, White will win. For example 54...♕e8 55.♘e5 ♖a7 (55...♖f6 56.♕h4) 56.♗b4 ♖c7 57.♔e2 ♖c8 58.♔d2 ♖c7 59.c6 ♖xc6 60.♘xc6 ♕xc6 61.♕g6.

48...♗xh8 allows the nice



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

49.♗f7+!! ♔xf7 50.♖xh7+ ♗g7 51.g6+! ♔f8 (51...♔g8 52.♖h8+; 51...♔e8 52.♖xg7 ♘f8 53.♖g8 ♖g7 54.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 55.♘xc6) 52.♖xg7.

49.♘f7 ♖xf7 50.♗xf7+

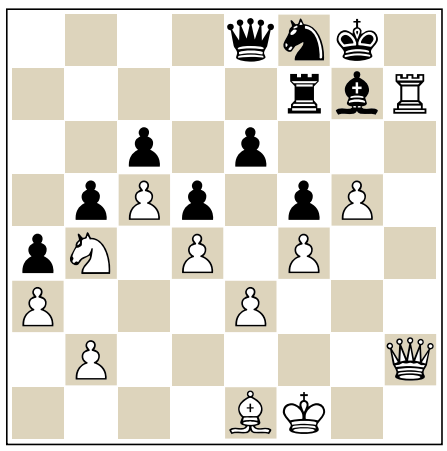
White had another way to victory: 50.♘xc6 ♕a8 51.g6 ♘xg6 52.♗xg6 ♕xc6 53.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 54.♖xh7.

50...♖xf7

50...♔xf7 is met by 51.♘xc6.

51.♖xh7 ♕e8

Or 51...♘xh7 52.g6! ♖c7 53.♕xh7+ ♔f8 54.♗h4! ♕e8 55.♗g5 winning easily, e.g. 55...♕d7 56.♗h6 ♗xh6 57.♕h8+ ♔e7 58.♕xh6 ♕e8 59.♕h7+ ♔d8 60.g7.



52.♖h3

At this point I already saw it till the end. White swaps queens, plays b3, then a4, swaps the rooks on one file and then penetrates the enemy camp with his bishop and knight.

52...♘g6 53.♕e2 ♖c7 54.♕h5 ♔f7 55.♕h7

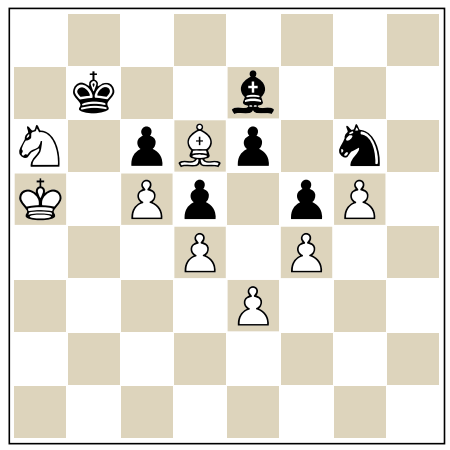
Black cannot avoid the queen swap.

55...♕g8 Or 55...♘f8 56.g6+ ♘xg6 57.♖g3, and wins. Or 55...♕d8 56.♖h6 ♘f8 57.♘xc6 ♖xc6 58.g6+, and wins.

56.♕xg8+ ♔xg8 57.♘d3 ♖a7 58.♔e2 ♔f7 59.♘b4 ♘e7 60.♔d1 ♖a8 61.♔c2 ♖g8 62.♘d3 ♖a8 63.♖h7 ♘g6 64.b3 ♘f8 65.♖h2 axb3+ 66.♔xb3 ♔e8 67.♖a2 ♔d7 68.a4 bxa4+ 69.♖xa4 ♖xa4 70.♔xa4 ♔c8 71.♗a5 ♘g6 72.♘b4 ♔d7

Or 72...♔b7 73.♗d8! with the idea of ♔a5, ♘a6.

73.♘a6 ♔c8 74.♗c7 ♗f8 75.♔a5 ♔b7 76.♗d6 ♗e7



77.♗xe7

It is never too late to make a blunder: 77.♘c7? ♗d8.

77...♘xe7 78.♘b4 ♘g8 79.♘d3 ♘e7 80.♘e5 ♘g8 81.g6 ♘f6 82.g7 Black resigned.

Medias/Bazna 2010 — **cat. XX**

					1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2813	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ 1	1 ½	1 1	7½	2918
2	Teimour Radjabov	IGM	AZE	2740	½ 0	* *	1 1	1 ½	0 ½	½ ½	5½	2778
3	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2741	½ ½	0 0	* *	1 ½	½ 1	1 ½	5½	2778
4	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR	2733	½ 0	0 ½	0 ½	* *	1 1	½ ½	4½	2707
5	Liviu-D. Nisipeanu	IGM	ROU	2672	0 ½	1 ½	½ 0	0 0	* *	½ 1	4	2683
6	Wang Yue	IGM	CHN	2752	0 0	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	* *	3	2590

At the final press conference, 2010 U.S. Champion Gata Kamsky glances at Yury Shulman, the last rival he shook off by drawing with him in an Armageddon play-off.

BETSY DYNAKO

In 1991 sixteen-year-old wunderkind Gata Kamsky defeated an older former champion, Joel Benjamin, in the final to win the U.S. Championship. He, like many observers, must have expected it would be the first of many U.S. titles. But while Kamsky was working his way into the top handful of players in the world, he passed on a few U.S. Championships and failed to win in 1993. Then came retirement while Kamsky pursued higher education. Kamsky earned a law degree but never practiced, returning to chess in 2004. Older and wiser, Gata found friends and fans forthcoming without the pernicious interference of his father Rustam. But with Nakamura and Onischuk flexing their muscles, Kamsky came up empty in title quests in 2004, 2006, and 2009. At the cusp of thirty-six, Kamsky finally made it back to the winner's circle after a gap of nineteen years.

ST. LOUIS

Worth the Wait

Joel Benjamin

Gata Kamsky's win in the 2010 U.S. Championship represents not only the longest period between a first and second U.S. title, but also probably the longest gap between any two U.S. titles. (A preliminary search indicates the second longest gap between first and second titles belongs to the author of these lines, who repeated his win from 1987 in 1997.) Kamsky won by the slimmest of margins, defeating Yury Shulman in a playoff... by drawing with him. Permit me to explain that by backing up a bit.

The terrific debut of the U.S. Championship in St. Louis last year did not seem to invite any major changes. However, the brain trust of the Saint Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Center, sponsor Rex Sinquefield and director Tony Rich, decided to speculate on a new format to try to make the event even better. Twenty-four players is a bit small for a nine-round Swiss, and increasing the field would invite space problems and dilute the field. In order to ensure that top contenders would face each other in the last round, the new format created a seven-round Swiss with the top four players qualifying for a quad final to decide the title. The remaining players played two more rounds in a 'consolation Swiss' to settle the remaining twenty places.

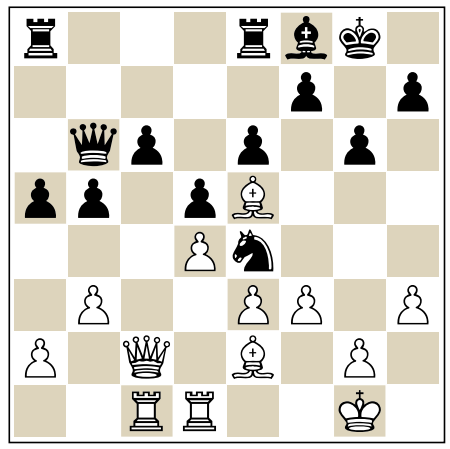
A number of the top players had their doubts about the new system. Perhaps we grandmasters possess a natural pessimism or skepticism. It's easy enough to think of potential problems – what if a tournament favorite did not have enough time to recover from a slow start?... What if all the games in the quad finals were drawn? No doomsday scenario came to pass, and the tournament's top four seeds, Nakamura, Kamsky, Onischuk, and Shulman, all made it to the quad.

In the second round of the quad, Kamsky overcame Onischuk in a long endgame, while Shulman blitzed Nakamura with a devastating combination. Rather serendipitously, the two winners faced off in the final quad round, though the game petered out into a dead ending in just thirty moves, necessitating a playoff the next day.

There is no perfect way to break ties in a tournament. There isn't time to play slow games, and even rapid games often do not produce a winner. So the tie-break went straight for an Armageddon game, with Black receiving draw odds but conceding time odds. Kamsky's low bid of twenty minutes to sixty 'won'. A tremendously resilient defender, Kamsky later suggested that he should not have bid lower than thirty minutes. Shulman, a dynamic but much slower player than Kamsky, probably would not have enjoyed trading places.

SL 10.8 – D11
Yury Shulman
Gata Kamsky
St. Louis 2010 (tie-break)

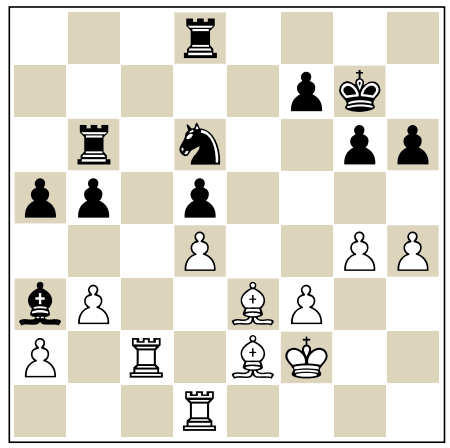
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♕b6 8.b3 ♗g4 9.♗a3 ♖e8 10.♖c1 e6 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘bd7 13.♗d6 ♗f8 14.♗g3 a5 15.♕c2 ♕a7 16.♖fd1 ♘b6 17.♗e2 ♘c8 18.c5 b6 19.♘a4 ♘e4 20.♗e5 b5 21.♘b6 ♘xb6 22.cxb6 ♕xb6 23.f3



23...♘d6

My computer recommends 23... f6, with the idea of meeting 24. ♗h2 with 24...♗h6. I'm not convinced it's a good idea, but you wouldn't consider it under the gun from the clock.

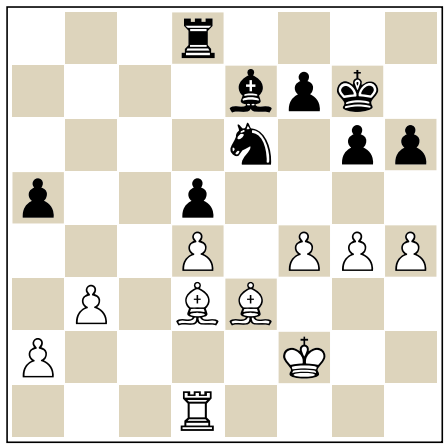
24.♕xc6 ♖eb8 25.♕xb6 ♖xb6 26.♔f2 ♘e8 27.♖c2 ♗a3 28.e4 ♔f8 29.g4 h6 30.h4 ♖d8 31.♗f4 ♔g7 32.♗e3 ♘d6 33.exd5 exd5



34.♖c5!

White wins a pawn, but the technical process doesn't go smoothly with both sides almost out of time.

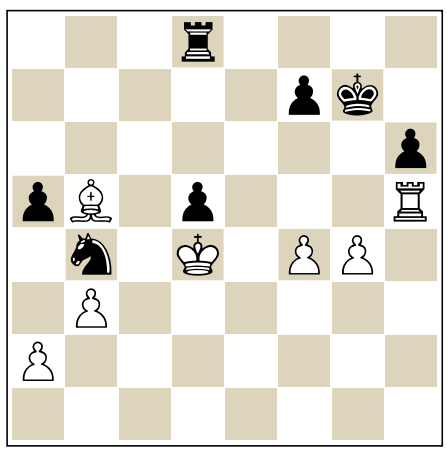
34...♘e8 35.♖xb5 ♖xb5 36.♗xb5 ♘c7 37.♗d3 ♘e6 38.f4 ♗e7



39.♖h1?

This lemon gives back most of White's advantage. 39.♔g3 was natural and good, after which White can drive away the knight from e6 and keep plugging away.

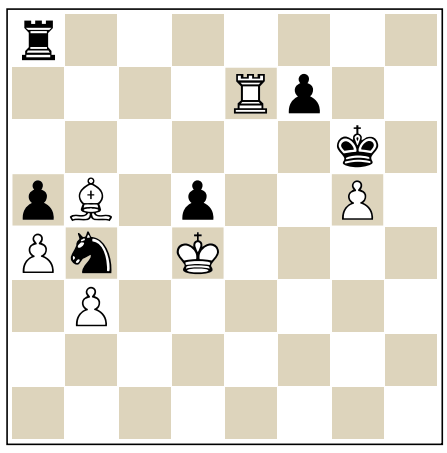
39...♗f6 40.h5 gxh5 41.♖xh5 ♗xd4 42.♗xd4+ ♘xd4 43.♔e3 ♘c6 44.♗b5 ♘b4 45.♔d4



45...♖b8

There is hardly any time left for calculation, but Kamsky could have grabbed 45...♘xa2 in view of 46.♖xd5? ♖xd5+ 47.♔xd5 ♘c3+ 48.♔c5 ♘xb5 49.♔xb5 f5! and wins.

46.a4 ♖c8 47.♖e5 ♔f6 48.♖f5+ ♔g6 49.♖e5 ♔f6 50.g5+ hxg5 51.fxg5+ ♔g6 52.♖e7 ♖a8



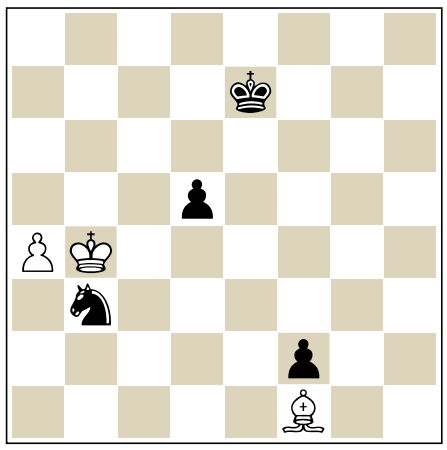
BETSY DYNAKO

In the Armageddon play-off Black had only 20 minutes against 60 for White, but Kamsky's draw odds brought him the title.

53.♗e8?

After this time pressure error it's smooth sailing for Kamsky.

53...♔xg5 54.♔c5 f5 55.♖g7+ ♔f6 56.♖g6+ ♔e7 57.♗b5 f4 58.♖g4 f3 59.♔b6 f2 60.♖f4 ♖f8 61.♖xf8 ♔xf8 62.♔xa5 ♘c6+ 63.♔b6 ♘d4 64.♗f1 ♘xb3 65.♔b5 ♔e7 66.♔b4



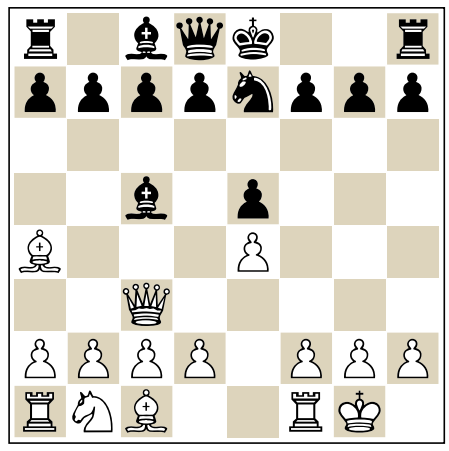
Whether Black could win at this point is of course irrelevant to the situation. Draw agreed.

The players split first and second, $25,000 each, with Kamsky taking home a $5,000 bonus. The normally stoic Kamsky raised his arms in triumph in the commentary room, graphically demonstrating the deep appreciation of his achievement.

Most of Kamsky's wins were fairly technical (his game with Robson came down to two knights and a pawn vs. a bishop), but he did show some power in the following game.

RL 1.7 – C64
Gata Kamsky
Larry Christiansen
St. Louis 2010 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘d4 5.♗a4 ♘xf3+ 6.♕xf3 ♘e7 7.♕c3!?

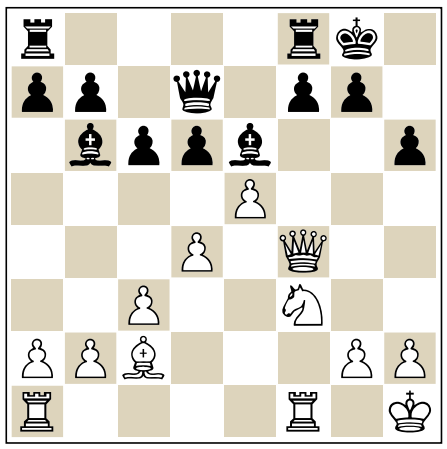


Quite an unusual and creative way to establish an initiative. **7...♗d4 8.♕g3 ♘g6 9.c3 ♗b6 10.d4 0-0** White would have definite compensation after 10...exd4 11.f4. The reply 11...♕h4 12.♕xh4 ♘xh4 13.f5 would leave the knight trapped.

11.f4 exf4

Again Black could live more dangerously with 11...exd4 12.f5 ♕f6 13.♔h1 (not 13.♗g5 ♕e5 14.fxg6 ♕xg3 15.hxg3 dxc3+, snagging the rook in the corner) 13...h6.

12.♗xf4 ♘xf4 13.♕xf4 d6 14.♘d2 ♗e6 15.♔h1 c6 16.♘f3 h6 17.♗c2 ♕d7 18.e5



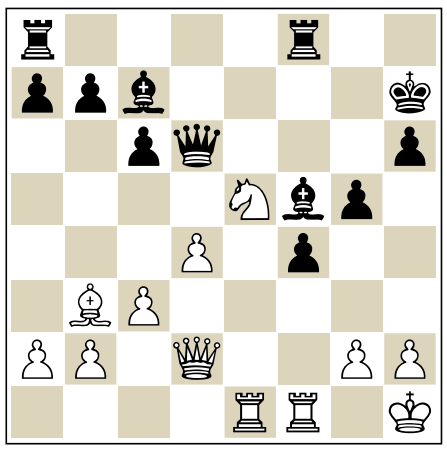
18...dxe5

While the two players discussed the game with the onsite commentators, Maurice Ashley and Jennifer Shahade, Larry suggested going for immediate counterplay with 18...f5 19.exd6 g5. It looks too slow, however: after 20.♕d2 Black can't consolidate the pawn advances, as 20...♕xd6 is slammed by 21.♘xg5.

19.♘xe5 ♕d6 20.♕g3 f5

White can ultimately force this move anyway. Christiansen's characteristic active defense comes up just short.

21.♖ae1 ♗c7 22.♕h3 f4 23.♕d3 ♗f5 24.♗b3+ ♔h7 25.♕d2 g5



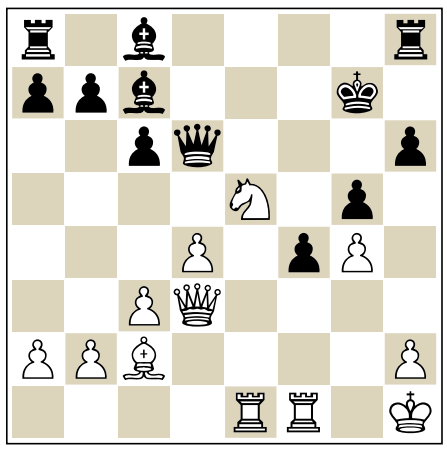
26.g4!

This is the clincher. Black will get sliced on the b1-h7 diagonal.

26...♗c8

I was puzzled to see Jennifer ask Gata about 26...fxg3, but apparently computers take a few moments to see that 27.♖xf5 ♖xf5 28.♗c2 just wins a piece for White.

27.♕d3+ ♔g7 28.♗c2 ♖h8



29.♘g6

Black can now put up some resistance with 29...♗e6, so perhaps 29.♕g6+ ♕xg6 30.♘xg6 is even more devastating.

29...♗xg4 30.♖e7+ ♔f6 31.♖xc7 ♖hg8 Or 31...♕xc7 32.♘xh8 ♖xh8 33.♕g6+, winning.

32.♘e5 Black resigned.

Though Shulman is happily settled in America, his heart belongs to the French. Three of his four wins came with black, all with his favorite defense. Perhaps considering it more a challenge than a warning, Nakamura eschewed the advice from the peanut gallery and took him head on... with disastrous results.

Hikaru's injury was preceded by insult, as he stated rather undiplomatically that the strategy for the finals was to knock off Shulman and draw the other two games. Yury made him choke on his words.

FR 11.1 – C18
Hikaru Nakamura
Yury Shulman
St. Louis 2010 (quad-2)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♕a5 7.♗d2 ♕a4

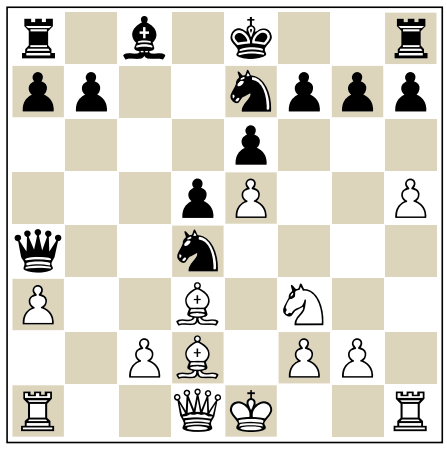
The early queen sortie still brings to mind an old game between two recently departed chess figures. Fischer-Hook, Siegen 1970, continued 8.♕g4 ♔f8 9.♕d1, but nowadays White overwhelmingly goes for 8.♕b1, nearly forcing Black to close the center with 8...c4.

8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.h4 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘ge7 11.h5 ♘xd4 12.♗d3

BETSY DYNAKO

Nineteen years after his first U.S. title, Gata Kamsky received 'the winner's check' for his win in the 2010 championship from sponsor Rex Sinquefield.

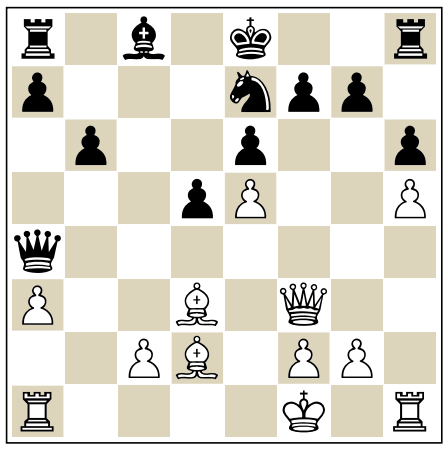
Nakamura has steered into channels pioneered by Kasparov in the early nineties. Those games generally sprang from a different move order involving 6...♘e7 7.h4!?.



12...h6

Most of the olden games continued 12...♘ec6 13.♔f1! intending ♖h4. One notable example, Kasparov-Anand, Linares 1992: 13...♘xf3 14.♕xf3 b6 15.h6, with an advantage for White. Shulman prepared a refinement that has been seen in very few games.

13.♔f1 ♘xf3 14.♕xf3 b6



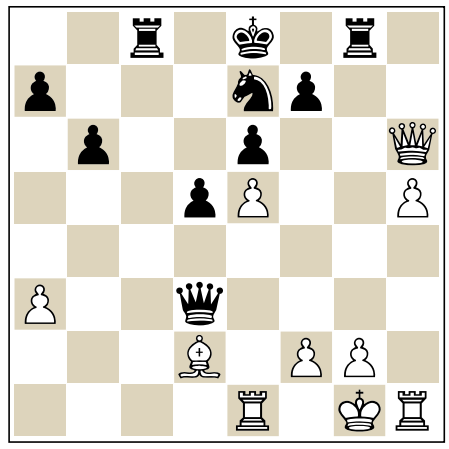
15.♕g3

This is the only way to exploit 12...h6. White obtains a potentially lethal passed h-pawn. This is undoubtedly why players shied away from the move for so long, but Shulman feels Black has enough counterplay to keep the h-pawn from moving.

15...♗a6 16.♕xg7 ♗xd3+ 17.cxd3 ♖g8 18.♕xh6 ♕d4 19.♖e1

I found an obscure game with 19.♖c1, which does have the virtue of keeping Black's rook off c8.

19...♕xd3+ 20.♔g1 ♖c8



21.♗g5?!

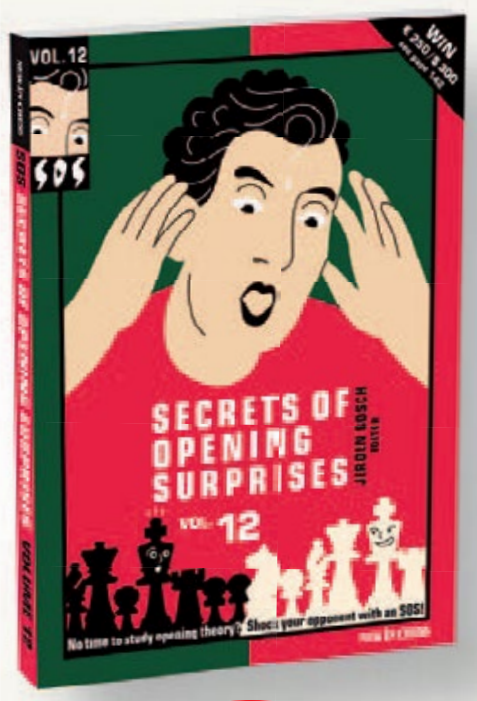
Nakamura is not the most objective player in the world. Here he should have backpedaled with 21.♕e3, going for an ending with something to offer for both sides.

21...♕f5 22.f4

Underestimating the danger to his exposed king, White travels down a slippery slope.

22...♖c2

BAFFLE YOUR OPPONENT!



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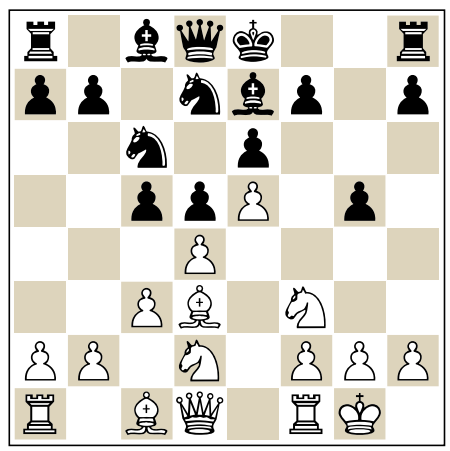
BETSY DYNAKO

Top seed Hikaru Nakamura saw his dreams of a new title go up in smoke when Yury Shulman played the French and won the game of the tournament.

while Kamsky and Nakamura faced challenges from determined trailers. Shabalov needed a win with black to catch Gata, but Kamsky's somewhat desperate piece sacrifice was enough to hold a draw. Larry Christiansen would overtake Nakamura with a win that barely eluded him.

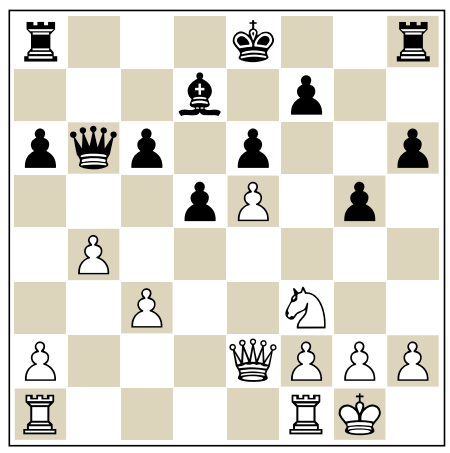
FR 17.2 – C03
Larry Christiansen
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis 2010 (7)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♗e7 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.♗d3 c5 7.c3 ♘c6 8.0-0 g5

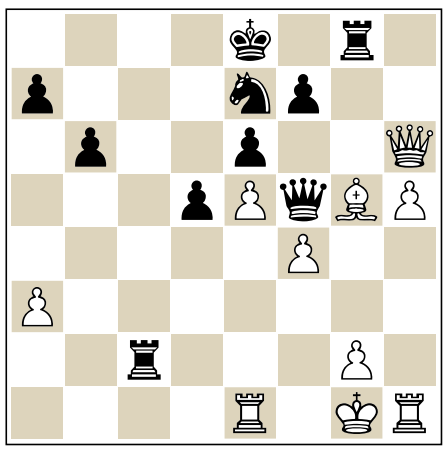


In this variation Black frequently tries to undermine White's center with this thrust, but in a must-win situation Larry must have been happy to see it.

9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.♗b5 h6 11.♘b3 ♗d7 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.♕e2 ♗b6 14.♗e3 a6 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♗xb6 ♕xb6 17.b4



White settles into a comfortable position, with a strong knight on d4 playing against a bad bishop.



23.♖h2??

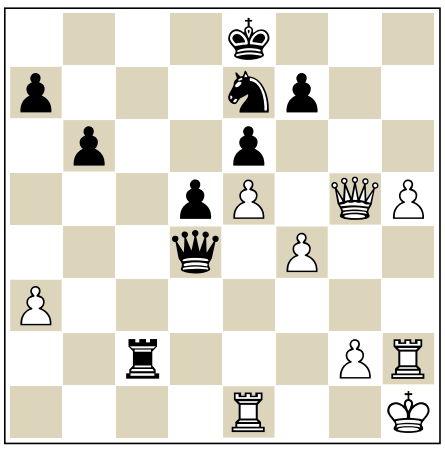
White can still bail out into a playable ending with 23.♕f6. Nakamura's move looks unacceptably unwieldy, and looks do not deceive here.

23...♕d3! Now Black's tactical plans are undeniable.

24.♕f6 ♖xg5

The computer points out that 24...♘c6 produces more or less the same finish. But Shulman's move is more forcing, more aesthetic, and more human. Here Nakamura shook his head several times, channeling Garry Kasparov, but not in the most productive way.

25.♕xg5 ♕d4+ 26.♔h1



26...♕e3

White resigned. He cannot defend his back rank, as 27...♖c1 will bust any sensible reply. For producing the game of the tournament, in magnitude and style, Shulman took home the $1000 best game prize donated by chess.com.

Onischuk and Shulman coasted into the final four with a draw,

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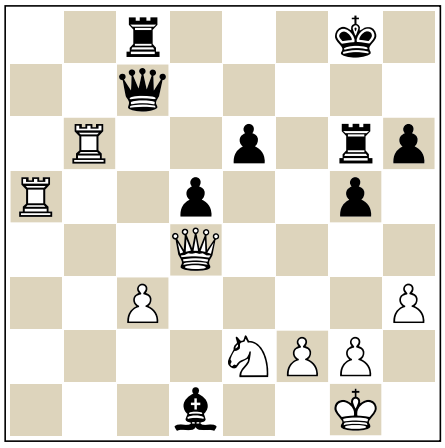
17...c5 18.♕e3 ♖c8 19.♖fc1 ♕c7 20.h3 ♖g8 21.bxc5 ♕xc5 22.♘d4 ♖g6 23.♖ab1 ♗b5 24.♖b4 ♔f8 25.♕d2 ♔g8 26.a4 ♗e8 27.♘e2 f6 28.♕d4 fxe5 29.♕xe5 ♕c7 30.♕d4 a5 31.♖b6 ♗xa4

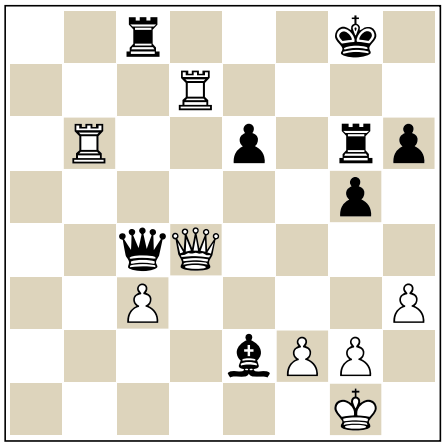
31...♖d8 intending 32...e5 should hold the balance without complications.

32.♖a1 ♗c2 33.♖xa5 ♗d1



34.♘g3

Larry was tempted to play 34.♖xd5 ♗xe2 35.♖d7 ♕c4 (35...♕f4 36.♖xe6! wins), but didn't recognize the strength of the killer quiet move



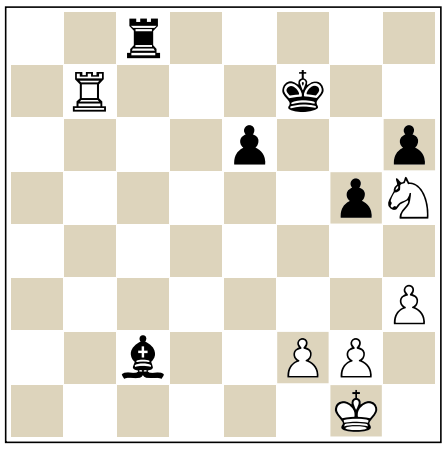
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

36.♕e5!!. White threatens to put the second rook on the seventh. It may seem like Black should have time to defend, but the loose bishop sinks him. The best Black can do is return the extra piece with 36...♕f4 37.♕xe2, but with a solid extra pawn and Black's loose king, White should win. Larry was philosophical about the missed opportunity, believing that no human should be expected to find it over the board.

34...♕xc3 35.♖xd5 ♕xd4 36.♖xd4 ♗c2 37.♖d7

White maintains winning chances.

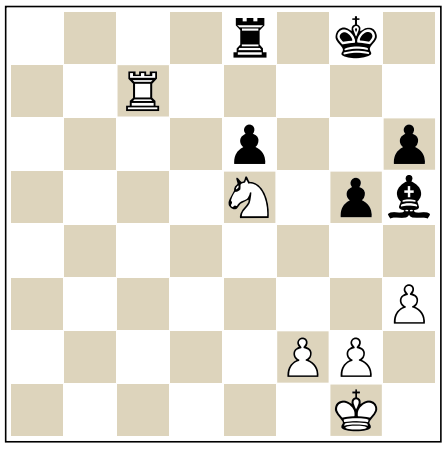
37...♖f6 38.♘h5 ♖f7 39.♖xf7 ♔xf7 40.♖b7+



40...♔f8

40...♔g6 41.g4 ♖g8 can't be healthy for Black, completely tied down by the mate threat on g7.

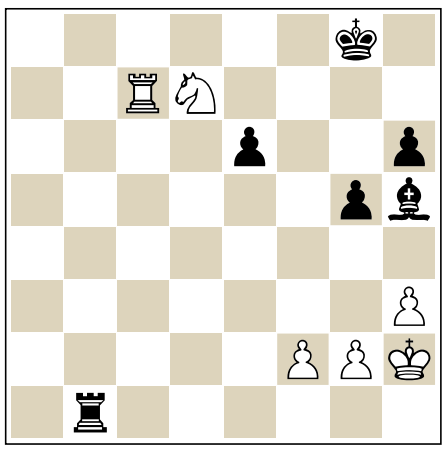
41.♘f6 ♗g6 42.♘d7+ ♔g8 43.♘e5 ♗h5 44.♖e7 ♖e8 45.♖c7



45...♖b8

Black didn't have to put the rook on a square where the knight could attack it.

46.♘d7 ♖b1+ 47.♔h2



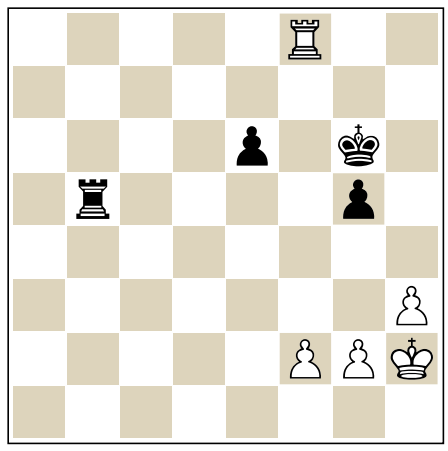
47...♗f7

47...♔f7?! looks bold, but I don't see a refutation.

48.♘f6+

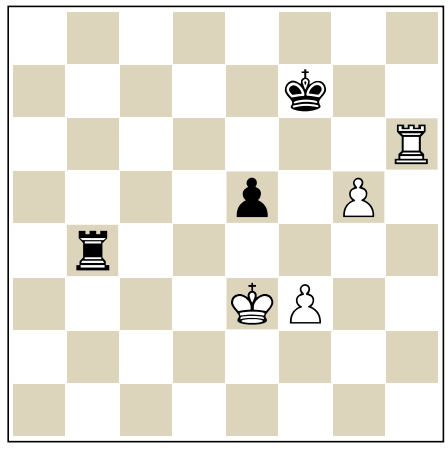
White can also try 48.♘e5 ♗h5 (48...♗e8 49.♘g4 gives White serious winning chances) 49.♖e7.

48...♔g7 49.♘g4 ♖b5 50.♘xh6 ♔xh6 51.♖xf7 ♔g6 52.♖f8



It would seem that the swap of White's f-pawn for Black's g-pawn would lead to a win, but Black can prevent that. The best White can do is to trade h for g and hope for a mistake.

52...♖b4 53.♔g3 ♖a4 54.♖f3 ♖b4 55.♖e3 ♔f5 56.♔f3 ♖f4+ 57.♔e2 ♖a4 58.g4+ ♔f6 59.♔f3 e5 60.♖b3 ♔g6 61.♖b6+ ♔f7 62.♖h6 ♖f4+ 63.♔e3 ♖a4 64.f3 ♖b4 65.♖h5 ♔f6 66.♖h6+ ♔f7 67.h4 gxh4 68.♖xh4 ♖a4 69.♖h6 ♖b4 70.g5



After this precipitous move it's all over, but I don't think further maneuvers would have changed anything.

70...♖f4 71.♖a6 ♖f5 72.g6+ ♔g7

Draw agreed.

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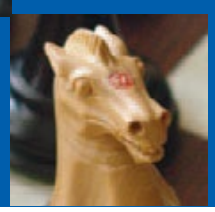

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The Old Guard Fights Back

Nearly fifty-four, Christiansen did not play like the oldest player in the tournament. Perhaps he and other veterans were inspired by the short film of last year's tournament screened at the opening ceremony. Entitled 'Changing of the Guard', the film showcased not only the young but experienced champion, Nakamura, but also two precocious newcomers, Robert Hess and Ray Robson. None of the youngsters were able to make a splash this year. Alex Lenderman came into his first U.S. Championship on a roll, but could only tally 3½ points. He's a good technician and counter-puncher, but I would like to see him sharpen his style for this event, especially against lower-rated players. Robson never got above fifty percent this year. Opponents are taking him very seriously and adjusting to his razor sharp style. Only Hess managed a plus score, with an improved second half. These three will surely post major results in later trips to St. Louis, but for now the future has been put on hold.

Christiansen rarely plays in tournaments these days, but keeps his skills sharp playing on the ICC while working on new ideas. He showed his good form off the bat with a nice finish against the second oldest player in the field.

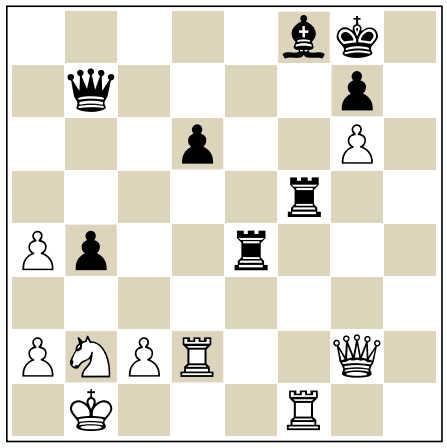
SI 27.3 – B60
Larry Christiansen
Dmitry Gurevich
St. Louis 2010 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 ♕b6 7.♘b3 e6 8.♕e2 a6 9.0-0-0 ♗e7 10.g4 ♕c7 11.♗e3 b5 12.f4 b4 13.♘a4 ♖b8 14.♗g2 ♘a5 15.g5 ♘d7 16.♘xa5 ♕xa5 17.b3 ♗b7 18.♔b1 ♗c6 19.♘b2 ♗b5 20.♕f2 ♕c7 21.h4 ♖c8 22.♖d2 a5 23.h5 a4 24.bxa4 ♗a6 25.♗f1

BETSY DYNAKO

Larry Christansen keeps his chess skills sharp playing on the ICC. At the closing party he showed his wife Natasha that his dancing skills are as youthful as ever, too.

♗xf1 26.♕xf1 ♕b7 27.♕g2 ♘c5 28.♗xc5 ♖xc5 29.♖f1 0-0 30.f5 ♖e8 31.♕g4 exf5 32.exf5 ♗f8 33.g6 ♖e4 34.♕g2 hxg6 35.hxg6 fxg6 36.fxg6 ♖f5

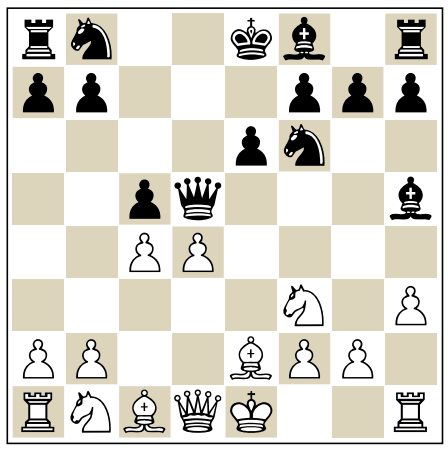


37.♕h3! ♖xf1+ 38.♖d1!
And not 38.♘d1 ♖h4 39.♕xh4 ♕h1. Black resigned.

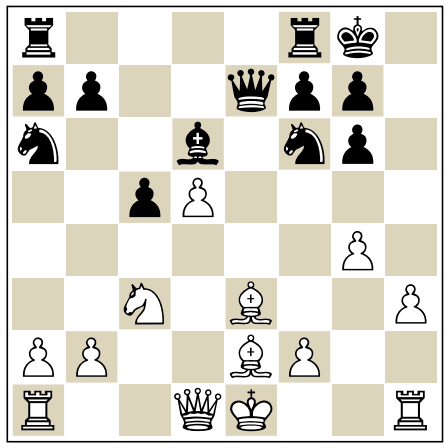
After the near miss in qualification, Larry was still on the cusp of taking the driver's seat in the consolation Swiss.

SI 46.5 – B22
Alex Stripunsky
Larry Christiansen
St. Louis 2010 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 e6 7.h3 ♗h5 8.c4?!



This move is worthwhile if a subsequent d4-d5 will chase away a black knight, but here it looks mistimed.
8...♕d7 9.g4 ♗g6 10.d5 ♗d6 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♗e3 ♘a6 13.♘h4 exd5 14.♘xg6 hxg6 15.cxd5 ♕e7



16.♔f1
My computer prefers White slightly after 16.♕b3 followed by

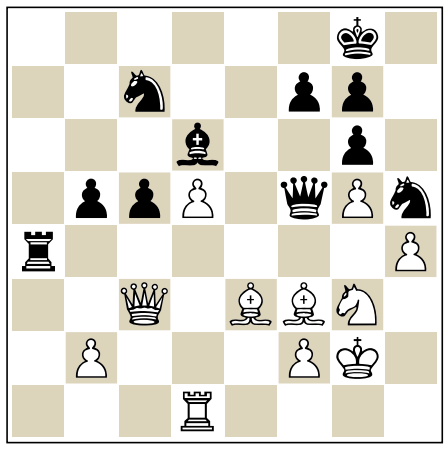
queenside castling, but I will respectfully disagree.

16...♘c7 17.h4 b5 18.g5 ♘h5 19.♗f3

After 19.♘xb5 ♘xb5 20.♗xb5 ♖ab8 Black's initiative is no picnic to deal with.

19...♖ad8 20.♔g2 ♕e5 21.a4 a6 22.axb5 axb5 23.♕d2 ♖fe8 24.♘e2 ♖a8 25.♖xa8 ♖xa8 26.♕c3 ♕f5 27.♖d1 ♖a4 28.♘g3

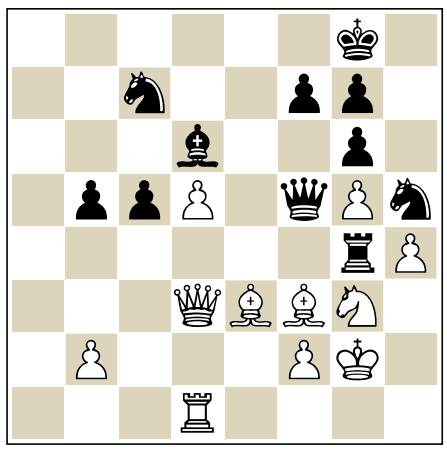
Black has two ways of maintaining a large edge.



28...♖g4?

This move is sound if White captures the rook: 29.♗xg4 ♕xg4, and White doesn't have time to defend both the rook and g3. Unfortunately, White has a crushing zwischenzug. Christiansen had two ways to maintain a significant edge: 28...♕d7 and 28...♘f4+.

29.♕d3!



29...♖xg3+

This doesn't work, but the alternatives don't look promising either: 29...♕xd3 30.♖xd3 ♘f4+ 31.♗xf4 ♖xf4 32.♘e4 c4 33.♖d1, and Black will struggle to restrain the passed d-pawn.

29...♕c8 30.♗xg4 ♕xg4 31.♗c1 does not give Black enough for the exchange.

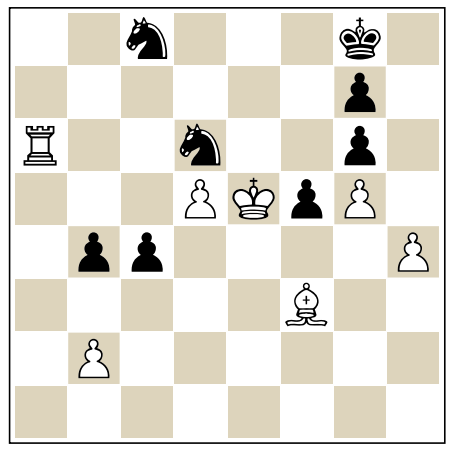
30.fxg3 ♕e5 31.♗f2 ♘xg3

Perhaps it was a better try to grab the b-pawn (31...♕xb2) and hope to make something of the connected passers.

32.♕e3

Black has to trade queens, leaving an easy conversion for Stripunsky.

32...♕xe3 33.♗xe3 ♘f5 34.♗f2 f6 35.♗e4 ♘e7 36.♗g3 ♘e8 37.♖a1 ♗xg3 38.♔xg3 ♘d6 39.♔f4 f5 40.♗f3 ♘ec8 41.♖a6 c4 42.♔e5 b4



43.♗d1

White can even fall into the trap: 43.♖xd6 ♘xd6 44.♔xd6 c3 45.bxc3 b3 46.♗e2 b2 47.♗d3 f4 48.♔e7 does the job. But Stripunsky can afford to play it safe.

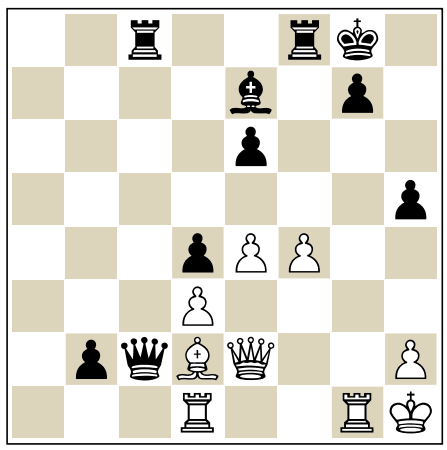
43...♘f7+ 44.♔e6 f4 45.♖a8 ♘d6 46.♔e5 ♔h7 47.♔xf4 c3 48.bxc3 ♘b6 49.♖a6 ♘xd5+ 50.♔e5 ♘e3 51.♖xd6 bxc3 52.♗b3 Black resigned.

'I forced him to win the game', Larry later lamented. Having already played Shabalov (as well as Kamsky, Nakamura and Onischuk) he would have been well positioned to top the group. But now we had a new favorite.

Strip Chess

The organizers had four wildcard spots to play with this year. Three wildcard spots went to teenager Sam Shankland, and twenty-somethings Irina Krush and Vinay Bhat. I would like to think there was some sentiment for Boris Gulko. Though he struggled last year and may be at the end of the line, it is worth noting that Boris had played in every U.S. Championship since 1987 (the longest active streak now belongs to Greg Kaidanov; catch me if you can!).

The final spot went to Alex Stripunsky, and the 'old guarder' (Stripunsky turns forty this year) proved to be a wise selection. Like many of the veterans, Stripunsky has also cut down on his tournament schedule and saw his rating drop a bit too much for an automatic invitation. Many fans may have forgotten that he tied for the top spot in 2004, the first of Nakamura's titles. Not only did he notch clear sixth place (second in the consolation Swiss) with five and a half points, but he achieved that score with five wins (tied for tops with Shabalov) and only one draw (agreed in what appeared to be a losing position against Yermolinsky). Stripunsky has an unconventional and often provocative style. He generally prefers to avoid major theoretical debates, instead relying on a set of comfortable openings.



Ehlvest-Stripunsky
St Louis 2010 (4)
position after 40...♗xe7

The b-pawn is about to crash through, so Ehlvest goes for a desperate sacrifice.

41.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 42.♖g1+ ♗g5

While this move is good enough

BETSY DYNAKO

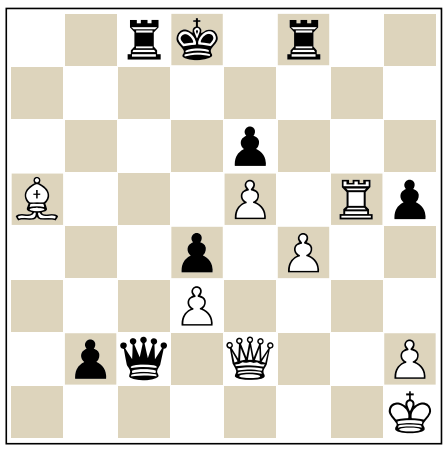
The Four Tops of the 2010 U.S. Championship: Hikaru Nakamura, Alex Onischuk, Gata Kamsky (in the champion's jacket) and Yury Shulman.

for an intricate win, it is worth noting that all other moves are quickly checkmated.

43.♖xg5+ ♔f6 44.e5+ ♔e7 45.♗b4+

45.♖g7+ ♖f7 (again forced, but sufficient) 46.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕xh5+ ♔e7 48.♕h7+ ♔e8 49.♕g8+ ♔d7 50.♕f7+ ♔c6 51.♕xe6+ ♔b7, and White runs out of checks.

45...♔d8 46.♗a5+



46...♔d7

Stripunsky passes on the quicker win which requires more calculation: 46...♔e8 47.♕xh5+ ♔d7 48.♖g7+ ♔c6 49.♕f3+ ♔c5! (even 49...♔b5 50.♕b7+ ♔xa5 51.♕a7+ ♔b4 52.♖b7+ ♔c3 53.♕a3+ ♔d2 54.♖xb2 ♖xf4 should be good enough) 50.♗b6+ ♔b5, and wins.

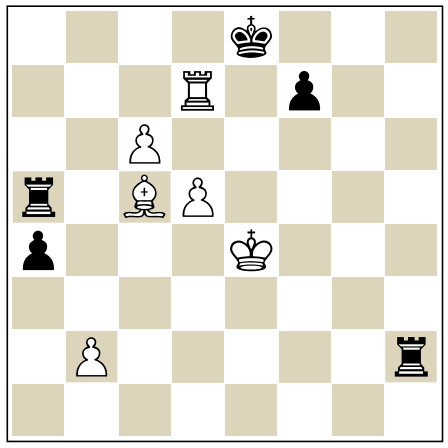
47.♖g7+ ♖f7 48.♖xf7+ ♔e8 49.♕xc2 ♖xc2 50.♖b7 ♖c1+ 51.♔g2 b1♕ 52.♖xb1 ♖xb1 53.♔f3 h4

White will have to give up either his d- or his h-pawn.

54.♔g4 ♖d1 55.♔xh4 ♖xd3 56.♔g4 ♖a3 57.♗b6 d3 58.♔f3 ♔d7 59.♗c5 ♖b3 60.h4 ♔c6 61.♗f8 ♔d5 62.h5 ♖b2

White resigned.

We saw another 'leapfrog' in the last round as Stripunsky lost to another hero of the old guard, forty-three-year-old four-time U.S. Champion Alex Shabalov. Shaba capped off an impressive comeback from the brink of relegation. Spoiling a good position against Shulman in Round 3, and losing badly to Christiansen in Round 4, Shaba looked to 'castle queenside' against Melik Khachiyan.



Khachiyan-Shabalov
St. Louis 2010 (5)
position after 50...♖a5

Khachiyan has been nursing a big advantage for several moves, and now he is ready to shove his pawns through.

51.♗b6! ♖h4+ 52.♔d3?

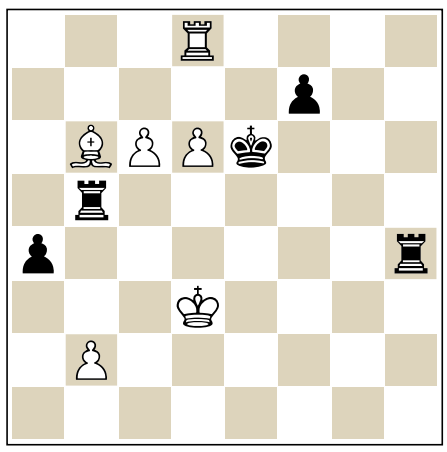
The right way is 52.♔f3!, which wins with a little expert navigation: 52...♖b5 53.♖d8+ ♔e7

BETSY DYNAKO

Alex Shabalov, who capped off an impressive come-back from the brink of relegation, and our man on the spot Joel Benjamin.

54.d6+ ♔f6 55.c7 ♖b3+ (55...♖c4 56.♗d4+ ♔e6 57.c8♕+ and wins) 56.♗e3 winning.

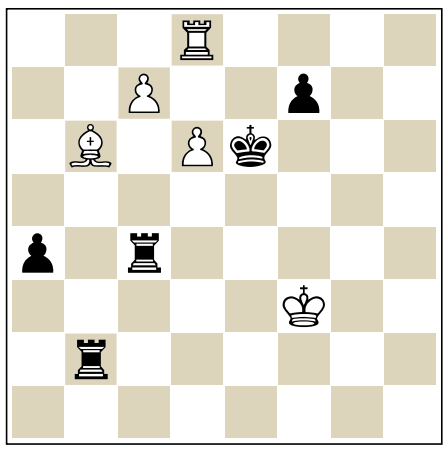
52...♖b5 53.♖d8+ ♔e7 54.d6+ ♔e6



55.c7?!

On 55.d7 Black can make a problem-like draw: 55...♖b3+ 56.♔e2 ♖xb6 57.♖e8+ ♔f5 58.d8♕ ♖xb2+ 59.♔d3 ♖b3+ 60.♔d2 ♖h2+ 61.♖e2 ♖b2+ 62.♔d3 ♖hxe2 63.c7 ♖bd2+ 64.♔c3 ♖c2+ 65.♔b4 ♖e4+ 66.♔b5 ♖e5+ 67.♔b6 ♖ec5 68.♕d7+ ♔e5 69.♕e7+ ♔d5.

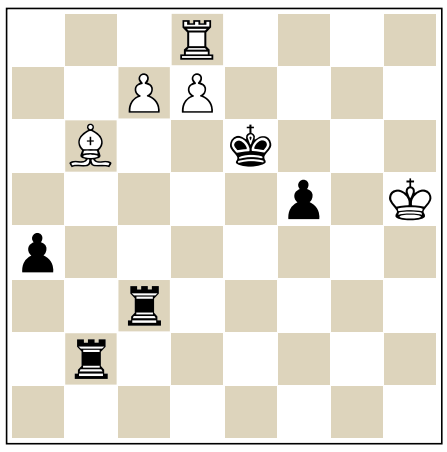
55...♖b3+ 56.♔e2 ♖xb2+ 57.♔f3 ♖c4



58.d7??

White can still draw with 58.♗e3.

58...♖c3+ 59.♔g4 f5+ 60.♔h5



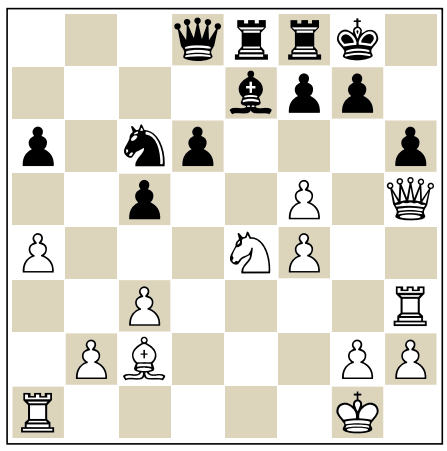
Black mates in three with 60...♖h3+.

White resigned.

Shabalov followed this reprieve with wins over Kaidanov in Round 6 and Krush in Round 8. The consolation clincher was a rematch from the last round of the Philadelphia Open.

SI 42.2 – B42
Alex Shabalov
Alex Stripunsky
St. Louis 2010 (9)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♗d3 ♗c5 6.♘b3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 d6 8.♘1d2 ♘f6 9.f4 ♘c6 10.c3 b6 11.♕f3 ♕c7 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.a4 0-0 14.♘d4 ♘d7 15.♕h3 ♖ae8 16.♖f3 ♘c5 17.♗c2 e5 18.♘f5 ♗c8 19.♕h5 ♗xf5 20.exf5 e4 21.♖h3 h6 22.♗xc5 bxc5 23.♘xe4 ♕d8



24.f6 ♗xf6 25.♕f5

Black resigned.

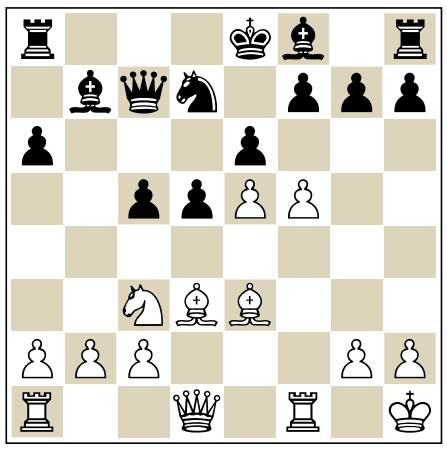
Dark Horses and Pandas

Ashley and Shahade played to a packed room on site and a larger crowd via the Internet Chess Club. Listeners were treated to call-in interviews with 'superfriends' Vishy Anand, Garry Kasparov and Magnus Carlsen. All players were encouraged to drop in after their games ended, though clearly the tournament favorites like Kamsky and Nakamura were most favored. Still, surprise contenders will inevitably emerge, and Jesse Kraai was easily the most entertaining and unpredictable of all the commentary visitors. Kraai is an anomaly in the chess

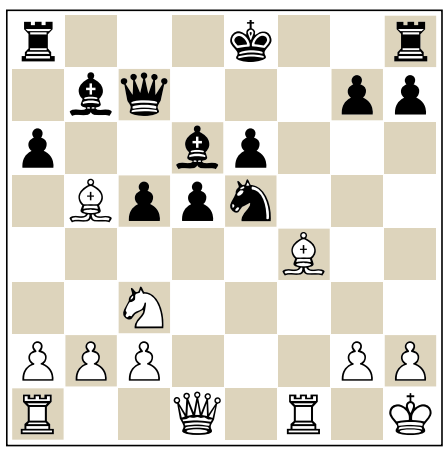
world, a New Mexico native who made his push to the grandmaster title in his thirties. He learned his craft playing in the second division of the German Bundesliga and honed it studying with other chess 'bums' in the San Francisco 'chess house'. With three wins in a row, Kraai flirted with qualification before a loss in Round 6 to Nakamura sent him sliding down to an eventual fifty percent.

SI 40.2 – B48
Jesse Kraai
Joel Benjamin
St. Louis 2010 (4)

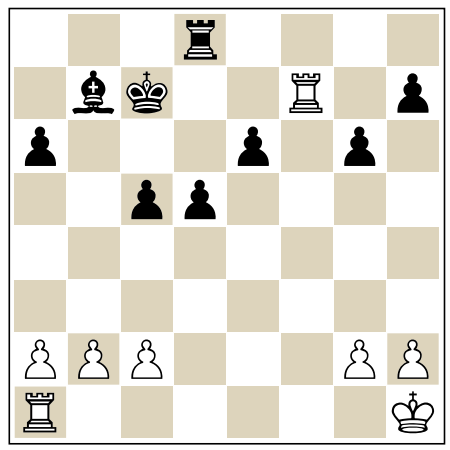
1.♘f3 c5 2.e4!?
'Melik (Khachiyan, Jesse's roommate at the championship) told me Benjamin doesn't play the Sicilian', Kraai explained to the audience. True enough, for the last few years. But I'm still about 100 games up on Jesse in Sicilian experience.
2...e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗d3 d5 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.f4 ♗b7 11.♔h1 c5
This move symbolizes my very strange form in St. Louis. I had three straight games with black where I was overrun in twenty moves. My computers don't mind this move, but of course they are happy defenders. As a practical policy, it's a good idea not to let your king face mortal danger right out of the opening.
12.e5 ♘d7 13.f5



Black has chances to defend this position, but unless he is an exceptional defender like Kamsky, a slip is inevitable... especially when you have burned a lot of time in the opening. Jesse explained his bold play as a conscious effort to 'channel the Panda'. It has to be said that GM Josh Friedel does not care for this nickname or the spread of the catchphrase.
13...♘xe5 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♗f4 ♗d6
White also stands well after 15...g6 16.♕e2 ♗g7 17.♖fe1! (17.♖ae1 0-0 18.♗xe5 ♖xf1+) 17...d4 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♘a4 or 15...0-0-0 16.♕e2 ♗d6 17.♗xa6.
16.♗b5+!



16...♘d7? The worst of my options, though my position is no picnic. 16...♗c6 17.♗xc6+ ♘xc6 18.♕g4 ♕d7 19.♗xd6 ♕xd6 20.♖ae1 and 16...♘c6 17.♕g4! ♕d7 18.♗xd6 ♕xd6 19.♖ae1 clearly favor White.
17.♗xd6 ♕xd6 18.♘e4 ♕e7 19.♕h5+ g6 20.♕e5 0-0-0 21.♘d6+ ♔b8
Anything but 21...♔c7 22.♘e8+ ♔b6 23.♕c7+ ♔a7 24.♘d6 and wins.
22.♗xd7 ♕xd7 23.♘f7+ ♕c7 24.♕xc7+ ♔xc7 25.♘xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖f7+



26...♔b6
26...♖d7 goes against the conventional wisdom of trading rooks when you are down the exchange, but it might offer some hope if Black can get the center pawns moving.

BETSY DYNAKO

Jesse Kraai ('easily the most entertaining and unpredictable of the commentary visitors') emphatically rejects a suggestion of his roommate Melik Khachiyan.

St. Louis 2010

			TPR
1	Gata Kamsky	7	2784
2	Yury Shulman	7	2780
3	Hikaru Nakamura	6	2698
4	Alex Onischuk	6	2713
5	Alex Shabalov	6	2688
6	Alex Stripunsky	5½	2642
7	Varuzhan Akobian	5½	2617
8	Robert Hess	5½	2595
9	Larry Christiansen	5	2639
10	Benjamin Finegold	5½	2607
11	Alex Yermolinsky	5½	2612
12	Gregory Kaidanov	4½	2551
13	Joel Benjamin	4½	2553
14	Jesse Kraai	4½	2575
15	Irina Krush	4½	2575
16	Jaan Ehlvest	4	2503
17	Ray Robson	4	2511
18	Alex Lenderman	3½	2447
19	Vinay Bhat	3½	2463
20	Melikset Khachiyan	3½	2496
21	Levon Altounian	3½	2474
22	Sergey Kudrin	2½	2385
23	Samuel Shankland	2½	2381
24	Dmitry Gurevich	2½	2382

St. Louis 2010 playoff

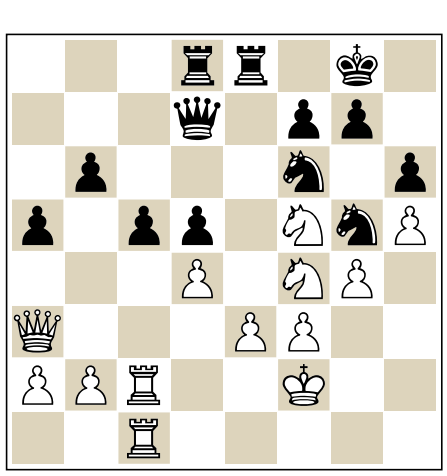
		1	2		TPR
1	Gata Kamsky 2702	½	½	1	2613
2	Yury Shulman 2613	½	½	1	2702

27.♖e1 ♖d6 28.♖xh7 d4 29.b3 ♗d5 30.♖g7 ♔b5 31.♖xg6 ♔b4 32.h4 ♖d7 33.h5 ♖h7 34.h6 ♔c3 35.♖e2 c4 36.♖g3+ ♔b4 37.♖h3 d3 38.cxd3 cxb3 39.axb3 a5 40.♔h2 ♗xb3 41.g4
Black resigned

Irina Krush lost out on an automatic invitation with a poor result in the 2009 U.S. Women's Championship. I suspect she would not have received a wildcard had Anna Zatonskih not declined her invitation for personal reasons. Irina more than justified her place in the tournament, defeating Kaidanov, Hess, and Lenderman, missing her final GM norm by just a half point. She certainly worked as hard as anyone. Trying to win with an extra exchange against Akobian in Round 3, she overpressed and lost in 113 moves. In the next round she missed a win in ♖ + ♗ vs. ♖ against Robson and had to settle for a draw in 93 moves. In this opening game she succeeded in putting the ball in the back of the net.

QO 11.3 – D31
Irina Krush
Gregory Kaidanov
St. Louis 2010 (1)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗f4 ♘f6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.♖c1 c6 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.h4 h6 11.h5 ♗h7 12.♗d3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 ♗d6 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.♘f5 ♕e6 16.f3 ♘bd7 17.♔f2 ♖fe8 18.g4 ♘h7 19.♘a4 b6 20.♘c3 ♘df6 21.♘e2 ♘g5 22.♘f4 ♕d7 23.♕a3 a5 24.♖c2 ♖ad8 25.♖hc1 c5



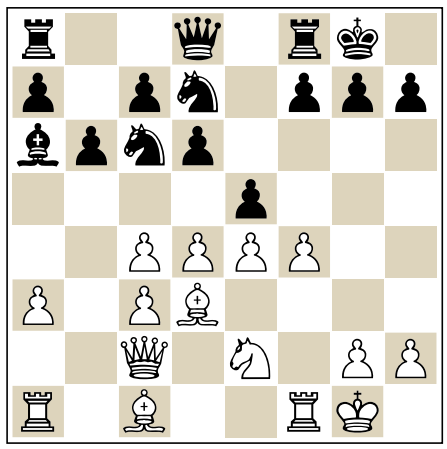
26.dxc5 bxc5 27.♖xc5 ♘e6 28.♘xe6 ♕xe6 29.♔g2 d4 30.e4 d3 31.♕c3 d2 32.♖d1 ♕b6 33.a4 ♕a6 34.♖b5 ♕a8 35.♖xa5 ♕b8 36.♖a6 ♖c8 37.♕d4 ♕b3 38.♖xd2 ♖c2 39.♖d6 ♖xd2+ 40.♕xd2 ♕xa4 41.♖xf6
Black resigned.

It's all about the Benjamins

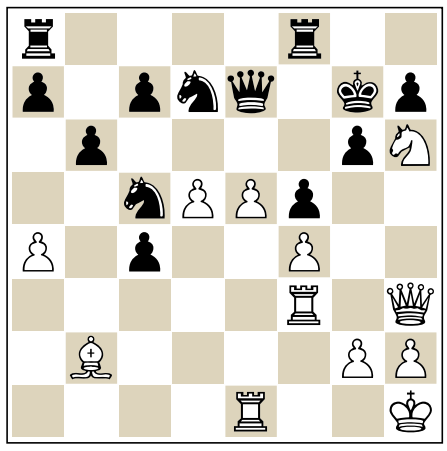
I'm used to being the most favored Benjamin, but Finegold has become the local favorite after relocating from Michigan. Finally losing the unofficial designation 'world's strongest IM', the new resident grandmaster at the Saint Louis Chess Club confidently worked his way to a +1 result. His placing could have been even higher if he had converted this sharp struggle:

NI 24.13 – E32
Ben Finegold
Robert Hess
St. Louis 2010 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 e5 8.♗d3 ♘c6 9.♘e2 b6 10.0-0 ♗a6 11.f4 ♘d7



12.♗e3
Improving on 12.f5 from Krush-Hess, Round 5, Finegold develops a vicious attack.
12...♘a5 13.c5 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 exd4 15.cxd4 dxc5 16.d5 f6 17.♘g3 ♘b7 18.♖ae1 ♘d6 19.♗c1 ♕e7 20.♗b2 c4 21.♕c2 ♘b5 22.a4 ♕c5+ 23.♔h1 ♘d4 24.♕c3 ♘b3 25.♘f5 g6 26.♘h6+ ♔g7 27.♕h3 ♕e7 28.e5 f5 29.♖f3 ♘bc5



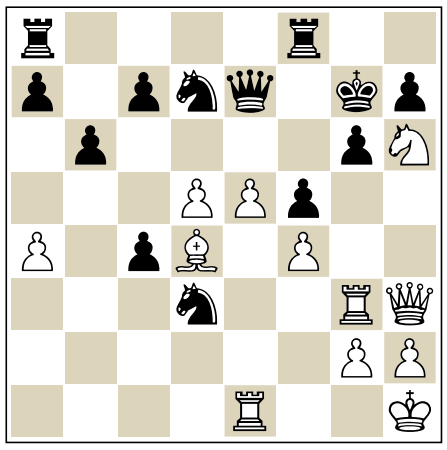
30.♖g3
Wrong order! 30.e6+ would have

BETSY DYNAKO

'It just keeps getting better.' At the dance-til-you-drop party Ben Finegold, new resident grandmaster at the Saint Louis Chess Club, enchants Irina Krush with his improvisations.

been crushing. Black's position soon collapses, e.g. 30...♘f6 (30...♖f6 31.♕h4!) 31.♖g3 ♔h8 32.♖xg6 ♘d3 33.♗d4 ♘xe1 (33...♘xf4 34.♖xf6 ♖xf6 35.♕xf5) 34.♘xf5.

30...♘d3 31.♗d4



31...c5!

Hess finds a great resource. 32.dxc6 ♕e6! 33.♖xd3 cxd3 34.cxd7 ♕xd7 is not at all clear. Now the pendulum swung towards Black and the game petered out to a draw.

Finegold will have to share bragging rights in town because Hikaru Nakamura himself moved to St. Louis just before the tournament. Both players will anchor the new entrant in the U.S. Chess League, the St. Louis Archbishops.

Whatever format the U.S. Championship settles on, the tournament continues to improve for the players. Rex Sinquefield and the Saint Louis Chess Club not only bumped up the prize-fund from $135,000 to over $170,000, but also added a number of amenities. A large contingent enjoyed a baseball excursion to Busch stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals. Nakamura easily took first in a $10,000 blitz tournament, with Christiansen a strong second. And finally, the classy closing ceremony, with speeches from dignitaries and butlered hors d'oeuvres, morphed into a dance-til-you-drop party with a visit from a Lady Gaga impersonator. It just keeps getting better.

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Memento Mori

After months of pessimism and uncertainty the concluding stage of the 2008/09 FIDE Grand Prix finally took place in the city of Astrakhan in the deep south of Russia. Meanwhile, to all appearances FIDE has discontinued the Grand Prix project, a decision that will most certainly be lamented by the winner of the last tournament, **Pavel Eljanov**. In a highly personal account, the Ukrainian grandmaster relates how the GP helped him overcome a serious form crisis and gave him the opportunity to score one of the finest victories in his young career – a victory that cemented his status as a new member of the world's top-10 with a 2755 rating.

Well, the enormous juggernaut that went by the name Grand Prix 2008/2009, after replacing a few important spare parts en route and changing course towards the southern regions of Russia, despite the schadenfreude of those who didn't wish it well, was late, but it finished!

A lot of battles were fought for and against this FIDE project. I understand, of course, that a multitude of issues regarding this organization have accumulated recently, but as for the Grand Prix, in my view this is the best thing that FIDE has managed to organize (i.e. start and finish) in recent times.

Of course, I can be exposed for lack of objectivity, as a direct participant in the process, but on the other hand, who other than an eyewitness can give an objective evaluation of this series? I don't know what strings Kirsan Ilyumzhinov pulled to save the series, or how much it cost him, but I hope that the organizers of each of the tournaments in the series retained the ambition and desire to hold tournaments of this level in future and to popularize chess in the regions.

If the majority of places in super-tournaments are taken by the super-elite, then this series offered a unique chance for others to prove themselves, those who have fewer trophies and aren't as widely known, but who are possibly even more ambitious young people. Two years ago how many chess fans knew about players like Wang Yue, Gashimov, Eljanov? Where would guys at the level of Alekseev, Bacrot, Kamsky and others have played, if it weren't for the Grand Prix? Obviously some people took full advantage of this chance and others turned out to be unprepared for tests in the highest spheres, but that no one was left unsatisfied and everyone gained invaluable experience – I have no doubt.

The Grand Prix series began for me in late 2008. By a quirk of fate, after FIDE changed the rules of play on the latest occasion during the cycle, some players refused to continue their participation in the series, and your obedient servant took one of the vacant spots.

This was a time when I was in a deep creative crisis. Having had a solid Elo of 2720, I had messed up all the events I took part in and my rating by then was already below the 2700 mark. That was a memorable period for me of re-exam-

Pavel Eljanov, winner of the final (and last ever?) Grand Prix tournament: 'Back then I promised myself that if I got my lost position back I would always remember that period and value new victories without taking them for granted.'

ining many of my values in life. In sound mind, with a strong memory and a normal physical condition, I fell into the pit of a creative crisis, the like of which my chess career had never known. Mathematically this looked like approximately minus 50–55 Elo points in six months of tournament appearances.

The first Grand Prix tournament went accordingly for me. Spending most of it at the tail end of the tournament table, I was glad not to take last place, outplaying my direct rival Ernesto Inarkiev in the deciding game.

At that time the worst thing, as it seemed to me, wasn't even what was happening then and there, when everything was going wrong, nothing was working out. It was fear of the unknown. Fear that the light at the end of the tunnel would never show itself.

Still, objectively speaking, I had a definite certainty that I'd drawn the right conclusions and that by changing something within myself I could get out of that pit.

There's a legend that in ancient Rome a slave would stand behind military commanders as they paraded on their home turf after grandiose victories, periodically repeating just two words: memento mori (remember you must die). That meant that despite the glory and honour, the triumphant one shouldn't be consumed with euphoria, forgetting that he was also a man and also mortal.

Back then I promised myself that if I got my lost position back I would always remember that period and value new victories without taking them for granted. The slave

'Astrakhan turned out to be a very nice city! It all looks very European!'

within me would always remind me of the most important thing...

The first sign that I was overcoming the crisis was that in April 2009 I made the first strong move of my life: I got married! Lena and I had been together since 2003, and this long and beautiful romance finally got its logical completion!

Instead of a honeymoon, on the very next day I left for the for me second stage of the Grand Prix in the city of Nalchik. Despite the fact that this region is one of the ones where there's tension, the chess players didn't feel this – the organization and attitude towards the participants was on a fantastic level! I also want to point out that I think this tournament in terms of its players was the strongest of the whole Grand Prix series and one of the strongest in the history of chess in general, consisting of 13 rounds. There were no routine games, each of the players made their mark with brilliant and memorable wins.

Even then I felt that the crisis was receding, and I could battle on equal terms with the strongest players in the world. True, I spoilt the overall picture by losing a rather painful game to Vladimir Akopian in the last round, sharing last place with players like Ivanchuk and Kasimdzhanov.

And still this was already some kind of impulse, a small one, but an improvement. In my next two tournaments on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosna round-robin tournament in Sarajevo and the Bosnian league, I performed superbly, winning 10 games in total with nine draws. After those successes the grass became green again, and the sky blue!

My next tournament took place in Armenia, in picturesque Jermuk. I was no longer afraid of anybody and was in a fairly resolute mood. After my sixth fighting draw in a row I refuted the trite postulate that these kinds of streaks usually end with a loss and outplayed Lev Aronian in the seventh round. However, in the deciding game in the battle for the high places I stumbled again, losing to Gata Kamsky in the penultimate round. For practically the whole game I had the initiative, and at a certain point it seemed I was close to repeating Bobby Fischer's record (until that game the score in my meetings with Gata was 5-0), but in the end I played unnecessarily sharply and was punished for it.

Vasily Ivanchuk won the tournament, demonstrating amazing staunchness in defence. In about six or seven games his positions were close to lost at some point, but he not only didn't become acquainted with the bitterness of defeat, but also ended up being unreachable by winning four games. Levon Aronian scored half a point less, which was enough for an early victory in the series. By winning all his decisive games (against Grischuk in Sochi, Leko in Nalchik and Inarkiev in Jermuk), Levon proved yet again that he's an exceptionally strong-willed fighter.

Absolutely fine motivation

In the last Grand Prix tournament in Astrakhan I unexpectedly found myself one of the ratings favour-

Commentator Evgeny Sveshnikov found attentive ears.

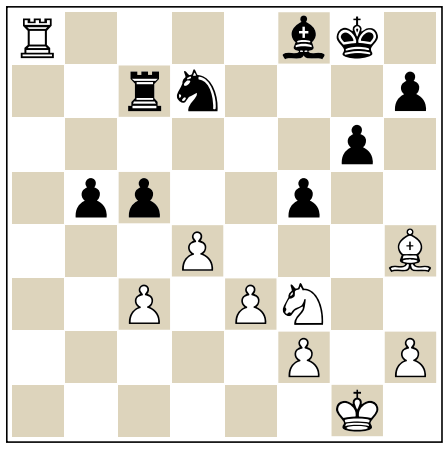
ites. Unexpectedly, as I'd never in my life even got into the prizes at that level of super-tournament (my best result was +1 in a tournament in Foros in 2008), and on the other hand I'd often had a minus score. All this led to my motivation for this tournament being absolutely fine, and I decided to prepare properly. I had a two-week training session in Israel with my friend and second Misha Roiz, where some treacherous traps were prepared, some of which my opponents fell into. But even more importantly, there was sun, sea and warm company, which put me into an excellent mood for the tournament!

Astrakhan turned out to be a very nice city! Thank you Sasha Evdokimov (the only local grandmaster, by the way), who showed me the city's main sights. When I went to the riverbank I forgot for a while that I was on the territory of what we call 'post-Soviet space' – it all looks very European!

However, it's worth pointing out that the organization was at a slightly lower level than that of the other Grand Prix tournaments in which I'd participated. A few days before the start the organizers informed the players that we wouldn't be staying in the best hotel in the city – the Grand Hotel – as was previously planned, but in one that was cheaper and further from the city centre. The hotel itself – the Golden Cove – was absolutely OK (the staff generally deserve the kindest words), but it was in direct proximity to the ship docks, where in the mornings birdsong was supplanted by the din of metal girders and containers. The inexperience of the organizing team also manifested itself in some other small details, but still on the whole I was left with favourable impressions of the tournament.

The main intrigue in the final stage was in the determining of second place in the Grand Prix series, which was worth a spot in the Candidates matches. The contenders, the players who'd preserved chances of getting there, consisted of almost half the tournament, although, as I also suspected, the battle would primarily unfold between two of the participants, specifically the Azerbaijani players Radjabov and Gashimov.

I managed to start the tournament well. True, in the first round I didn't take advantage of an excellent goal-scoring moment:



Eljanov-Svidler
position after 29....♗f8

I had definitely played well up to this moment (it is not so easy to outplay Peter in his favourite Grünfeld), but here I went crazy.

30.♘g5?

The move I wanted to play, and had intended in advance, is 30.♗e7!. What happened in my head is a mystery. Maybe 30...cxd4 was what disturbed me, but the simple 31.♘xd4 ♖xc3 32.♗xf8 ♘xf8 33.♘e6 destroys all illusions as White wins easily after 33...♔f7 34.♘xf8 h6 35.♘d7 ♔e6 36.♖a7.

The alternatives for 30...cxd4 wouldn't help Black either:

30...b4 31.cxb4 cxb4 (31...c4 32.♗d6) 32.♗xb4 ♔g7 33.♗xf8+ ♘xf8 34.♖a6, with a technically winning endgame.

Or 30...♔f7 31.♗xf8 ♘xf8 32.♘g5+ ♔f6 33.h4 ♘d7 34.♖a6+ ♔e7 35.♖e6+ ♔d8 36.♘f7+ ♔c8 37.♘d6+ ♔b8 38.♖e8+ and Black can resign.

30...b4! The most interesting, although 30...cxd4 31.cxd4 ♖c6 is also not bad.

31.cxb4 cxd4 32.♘e6 ♖c1+ 33.♔g2 dxe3

A draw also results from 33...d3 34.♘xf8 d2 35.♘xd7+ ♔g7 36.♘f6 d1♕ 37.♖a7+ ♔f8 38.♘xh7+ ♔e8 39.♖a8+ ♔f7 40.♖a7+.

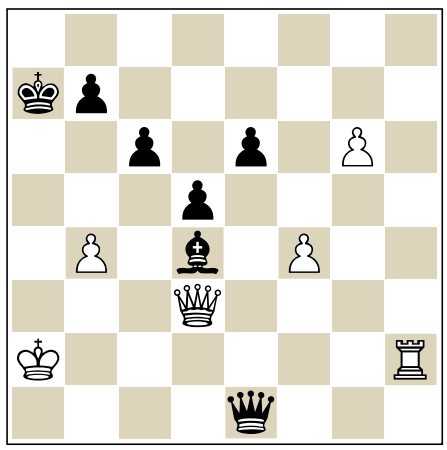
34.♘xf8 ♘xf8 35.fxe3 ♔f7 36.♖a7+ ♔e6 37.♖e7+ ♔d5 38.♗f6 ♖b1 39.♖f7 ♘e6 40.♖d7+ ♔e4 41.♖e7 ♔d5 42.♖d7+ ♔e4 43.♖e7 ♔d5 44.♖d7+

Draw.

Peter Svidler is rarely outplayed in his pet Grünfeld Defence.

However, I then managed to win an approximately equal ending against Akopian. After an extremely complicated and very interesting game with Gashimov that ended in a draw, there followed an unprecedented series of six decisive games, five of which Black won!

In the first place I was incredibly lucky. Although I did do a few things myself: at a point where I wanted to resign I continued making some moves and it unexpectedly turned out that the ball itself wasn't flying into the goal and the Chinese player had to sweat a little.



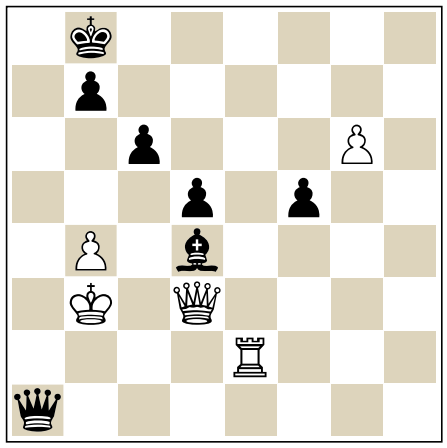
Wang Yue-Eljanov
position after 49.♕d3

This was actually the best position I had had in the game so far!

49...♕g1? A far from obvious mistake, thanks to which... I won!

Even so, it was more solid to retreat the bishop to g7, the difference being that after 49...♗g7 50.♔b3 ♔b8 51.♖e2 ♕a1 52.f5 exf5 53.♕g3+ ♔c8 54.♕e1 I have the move 54...♕f6!.

50.♖e2 ♔b8 51.♔b3 ♕a1 52.f5! exf5



53.♕xf5??

An inconceivable, inexplicable mistake. White slips and falls over the precipice, just when he is on the very edge of victory.

He should have played 53.♕g3+ ♔c8 54.♕e1! (this resource is what I had overlooked) 54...♕xe1 55.♖xe1 ♔d7, and it seems as though Black should hold. However, White has a precise path to victory: 56.♔c2 (56.♖e2 ♗g7 57.♔c2 b6 58.♔d3 c5, with counterplay) 56...b6 (56...♗g7 57.♖e3) 57.♖e3! ♗g7 58.♖a3 ♔e7 59.♖a6 ♗d4 60.♔d3 ♗f2 61.♖a7+ ♔f8 62.♖c7 c5 63.♖f7+ ♔g8 64.♖xf5, and White wins.

53...♕c3+ White resigned.

I had probably worked for a quarter of the point, but the fact that I had a full point next to my name on the tournament table was clearly due to fortune's smile!

I won one out of the next three games (as Black against Ernesto Inarkiev), but I played the other two in an undistinguished manner and lost in similar scenarios (to Alekseev and Ponomariov): something of an advantage in the opening, which gradually disappears. Next an unsuccessful battle with common sense, which advised me to exchange pieces off and dry things up. Then a couple of pseudo-active moves and confident play towards the dustbin.

All these events led to a large barrier going up between me and first place. In the next round I had to play Black against Teimour Radjabov. It was obvious that my opponent was thirsting for blood (up until then all his games had been draws) – rivals had to be overtaken.

However, I have to say that I came out for this game with par-

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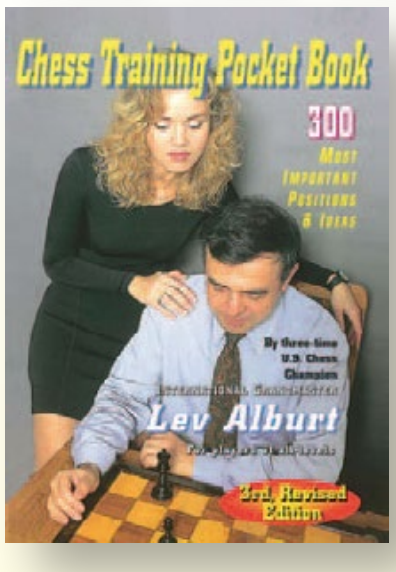

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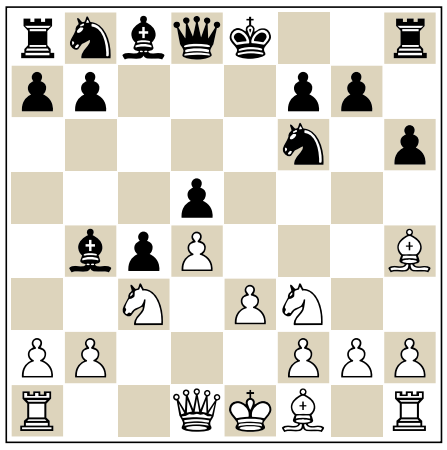
Pavel Eljanov arrived for his game against Teimour Radjabov 'with particular motivation, for certain reasons'.

ticular motivation, for certain reasons, and I had no intention of just sitting it out in the trenches.

NI 27.2 – D38
Teimour Radjabov
Pavel Eljanov
Astrakhan 2010 (9)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 c5 8.e3 c4!?

An extremely rare sub-variation of the Ragozin, seen for the first time in my tournament practice. I learned of its existence thanks to Alexander Morozevich, who used it successfully against... me, in the Tal Memorial blitz tournament. Previously, it was played regularly by GM Goran Dizdar, although without great success.



9.♘d2

A week later, blind fate drew together two old friends, at the ACP World Cup knockout tournament: 9.♗e2 g5 10.♗g3 ♘e4 11.♖c1 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♕a5 13.0-0. Here I played a novelty and very quickly obtained good counterplay: 13...0-0!? 14.♕c2 ♗f5 15.♕b2 ♕b6, and I won, although for most of the game all three results were possible, Moiseenko-Eljanov, Odessa 2010.

9...g5 10.♗g3 ♗f5 11.♗e5

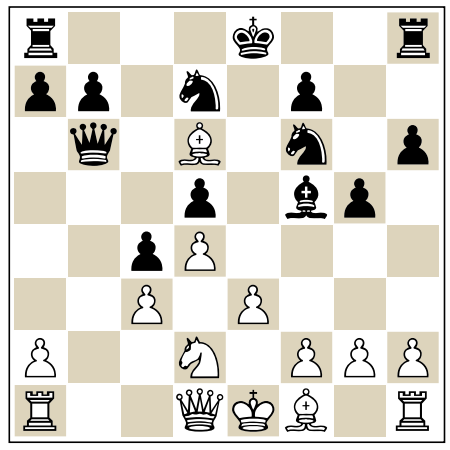
Against Morozevich I chose 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♖e8 13.a3 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♘c6 15.♖e1 b5, and Black had obviously obtained a comfortable position and went on to win: 16.♗f1 ♗g6 17.f3 a5 18.e4 dxe4 19.fxe4 ♘xe4 20.♘xe4 ♖xe4 21.♖xe4 ♗xe4 22.♕h5 ♘xd4 23.♖e1 ♗g6 24.♕g4 ♘f5 25.♗f2 a4 26.♖d1 ♕e7 27.♕f3 ♖d8 28.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 29.♕c6 ♘d6 30.♗g3 ♘e4 31.♕xb5 ♕e7 0-1, Eljanov-Morozevich, Moscow 2008.

Also possible is 11.h4, although it's very difficult to say which move is best here. The position is very unbalanced, and both sides have definite trumps.

11...♗xc3

Forced, since 11...♘bd7 12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.♘xd5 gains the two bishops at too great a cost.

12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♗d6 ♕b6



14.♗g3

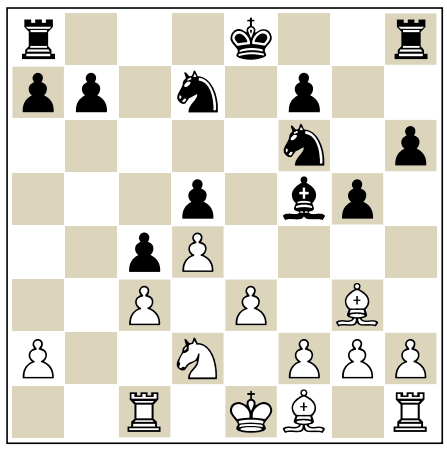
A novelty which looks rather illogical.

Having said A, one must usually say B, and this position is no exception. After 14.♗a3 it seems to me that Black has good play, but even so, with queens on the board, it is easier for White to develop active play.

14...♕b2!

Other moves are also possible, but it is obvious that in the endgame only White can have problems.

15.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 16.♖xc1

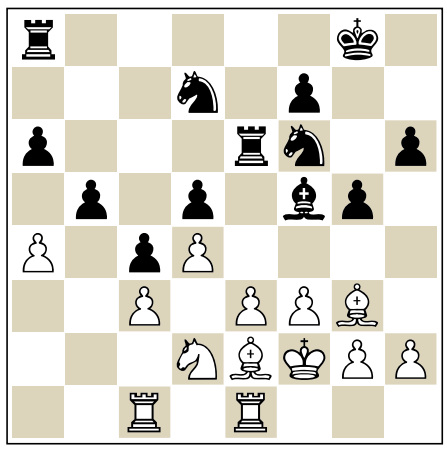


16...b5 Clearly, this cannot be dispensed with, since after 16...0-0 17.f3 ♖fe8 18.♔f2 ♖e6 White has 19.e4!.

17.f3 0-0 18.♔f2 ♖fe8 19.a4 a6!

After 19...bxa4 20.e4 dxe4 21.♘xc4 White is at the very least not worse.

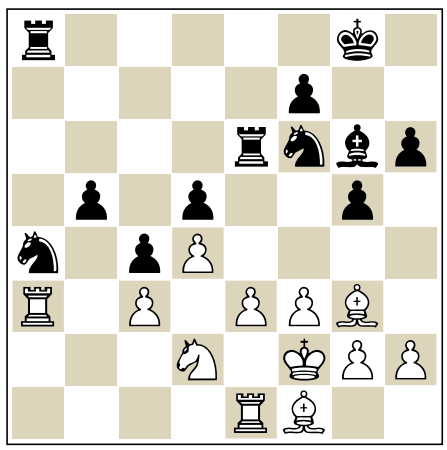
20.♗e2 ♖e6 21.♖he1



21...♘b6

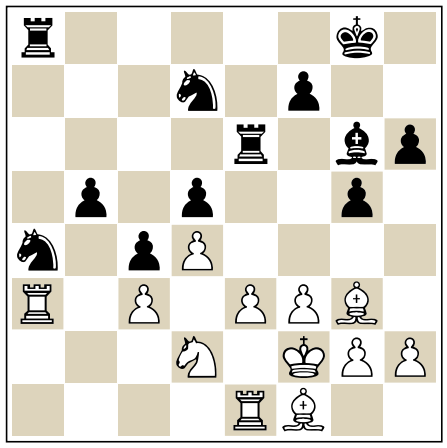
Probably more exact was 21...♖ae8! 22.♘f1 (I refrained from this because of 22.♗d1 ♗d3 23.♖a1, but Black has the knight transfer 23...♘b8! 24.axb5 axb5 25.♖a8 ♘c6, and the threat of ...b4 is highly unpleasant) 22...♘b6 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖a1 ♘a4 with a black edge.

22.axb5 axb5 23.♖a1 ♘a4 24.♖a3 ♗g6 25.♗f1



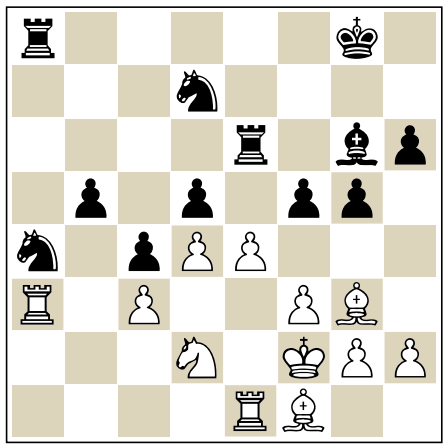
25...♘d7!?

I did not see any point in the direct 25...♖ae8 26.h4 ♘b2, since Black should only open the a-file when it brings concrete benefits. Analysis also failed to reveal what Black can hope for after 27.hxg5 hxg5 28.♖ea1 ♗d3 (28...♖xe3 29.♗e5) 29.♗e5 ♘d7 30.♗c7 with counterplay.



26.h4?!

He should have played 26.e4!, when after 26...f5 White has a clear choice:



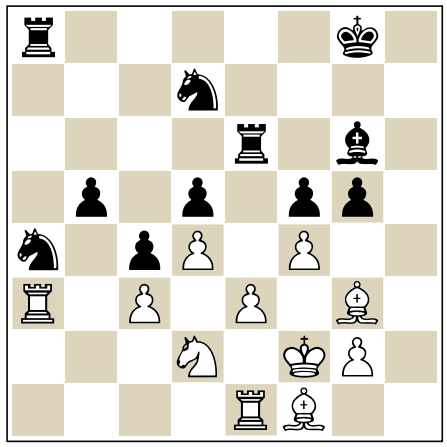
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 27.exd5 looks dubious, but White's play sort of hangs together move by move: 27...♖xe1 28.♔xe1 f4 29.♗f2 ♖e8+ 30.♗e2 ♘f6 31.d6 ♗d3 32.♘e4 ♘xe4 33.fxe4 ♗xe4 34.g3 f3 35.d7 ♖d8 36.♗xc4+ bxc4 37.♖xa4 ♖xd7 38.♖xc4 ♖a7 39.♖c5 ♖a1+ 40.♔d2 ♖a2+ 41.♔e1, with a draw;

B) 27.exf5 ♖xe1 28.♔xe1 ♗xf5 and here Black is clearly better;

C) The computer's 27.♖b1!? is interesting – after 27...♖b6 (if 27...fxe4 28.fxe4 dxe4 29.♔e3!, and the rest is a purely computer variation, leading to a beautiful draw by perpetual check: 29...♘f6 30.♖xb5 ♘g4+ 31.♔e2 e3 32.♘xc4 ♘xh2 33.♗xh2 ♘xc3+ 34.♖xc3 ♗h5+ 35.♔d3 ♗g6+) 28.exf5 ♗xf5 29.♖b4 Black retains slight pressure, but White has nothing much to complain about.

26...f5 27.hxg5 hxg5 28.f4

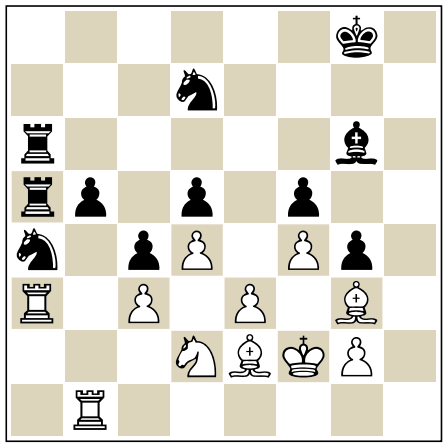


28...g4!

This is one of those cases where the computer, even after a long think, suggests a weaker move, certainly from a practical point of view: 28...♘f6 is what my machine suggests, having no doubt in its correctness: 29.fxg5 (29.♗e2 is also possible) 29...♘g4+ 30.♔g1 ♖xe3 31.♖xe3 ♘xe3 32.♘f3.

I calculated thus far and avoided this position in favour of the game continuation. The human logic works as follows: White has gained the e5-square, the position has opened up, and the pawn on g5 can be a source of inconvenience for Black. One can only go in for this if Black has a clear route to victory. What this is, I do not know, even after analysis, although Black has countless possibilities (32...♖e8, 32...f4, 32...♗h5, 32...♗e8), so maybe the reader will find a way.

29.♖b1 ♖a5 30.♗e2 ♖ea6



31.♗h4

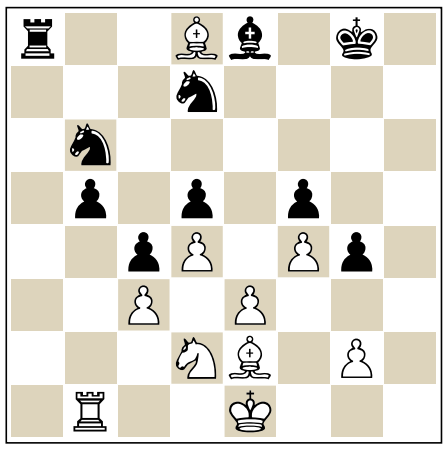
White's difficulties are illustrated by the following variations: 31.♖ba1 ♘b8! (31...♔f7 32.e4! fxe4 33.♘f1 with counterplay; or 31...♘f6 32.♗h4 ♔g7 33.♗d1 ♘xc3!? 34.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 35.♖xa5 ♘xd1+ 36.♔e2 ♘c3+ 37.♔e1 ♖xa5 38.♖xa5 ♗e8 and Black is not risking anything, but with accurate play, White should hold: 39.♖a6+ ♔e7 40.♖b6 ♗d7 41.♘f1 ♘e4 42.♘d2) 32.e4 ♘c6 33.exd5 ♘b6 34.dxc6 (34.♖xa5 ♖xa5 35.♖xa5 ♘xa5 36.d6 ♘b7 and despite the exchange of heavy pieces, White's position remains difficult, as he has too little space – 37.d7 ♘xd7 38.♔g1 ♘b6) 34...♖xa3 35.♖b1 ♗e8 36.♖xb5 ♖xc3 37.♖xf5 ♖c2 with a clear advantage for Black.

31...♘ab6 32.♖xa5 ♖xa5 33.♗d8

This turns out to be merely a waste of time.

But after 33.♘f1 ♘a4 34.♖a1 ♘b8 35.♘g3 ♘c6 36.♖a3 ♔f7 things are still not very sweet for White.

33...♗e8! 34.♔e1 ♖a8



35.♗e7?

The decisive mistake.

Seated between his good friends Boris Gelfand and Misha Roiz, Pavel Eljanov had a great time at the prize-giving.

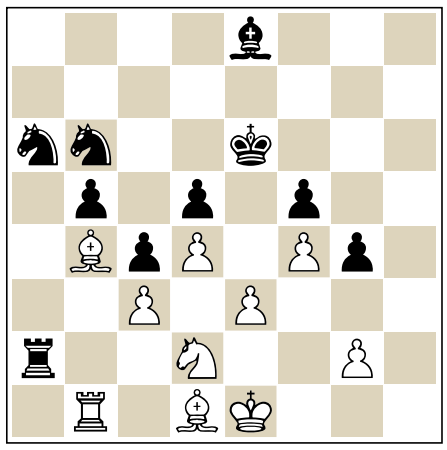
Black would also be clearly on top after 35.♗g5 ♘b8 36.♗d1 ♖a3 37.♖c1 ♘c6.

It was vital to prevent the black rook penetrating: 35.♗c7 ♘a4 36.♖a1 ♘f6 37.♖a3 ♖a7 38.♗e5 ♔f7 39.♗d1 ♔e6, where White retains some defensive resources.

35...♔f7 36.♗b4 ♖a2

It seems that this position is untenable.

37.♗d1 ♔e6 38.♖c1 ♘b8! 39.♖c2 ♖a1 40.♖b2 ♘a6 41.♖b1 ♖a2



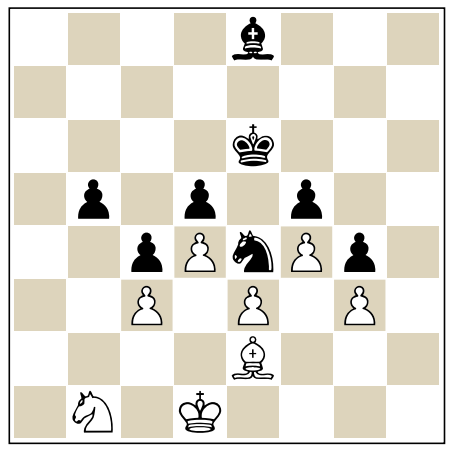
The cat-and-mouse game does not achieve anything. White cannot get rid of the enemy rook.

42.g3

Losing by force, but it is already difficult to recommend a move which does not lose.

42.♗e2 ♘xb4 43.cxb4 ♘a4, and Black comes in on the other side.

42...♘d7 43.♗e2 ♘xb4 44.♖xb4 ♘f6 45.♔d1 ♖a1+ 46.♖b1 ♖xb1+ 47.♘xb1 ♘e4



48.♗f1 ♘xg3 49.♗g2 ♘e4 50.♔e2 ♔d6 51.♗xe4 dxe4 52.♘a3 ♔c6 53.♘c2 ♔b6 54.♔f2 ♔a5 55.♔g3 ♔a4 56.d5 ♗d7

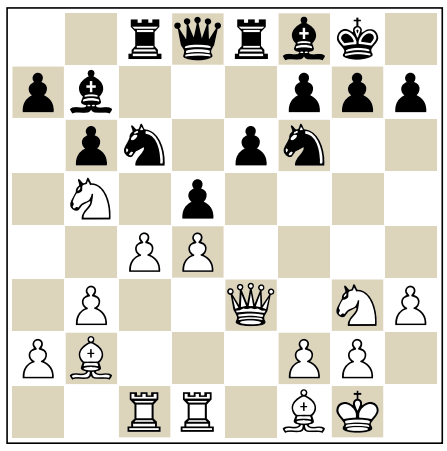
White resigned.

Again I was one of the leaders, but my next white colour (against Leko) didn't particularly put me in a positive mood. After discussing the plan for the game, Misha and I unanimously decided that it wouldn't be a bad thing to maintain the tension a little after the opening, but nevertheless to play with a bigger reserve of stability and dry things up at the necessary moment.

Astrakhan 2010 — cat. XX

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Pavel Eljanov	IGM	UKR 2751	*	0	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	8	2814
2	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR 2733	1	*	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	0	½	½	7	2758
3	Dmitry Yakovenko	IGM	RUS 2725	½	1	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	7	2758
4	Shakriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE 2763	½	½	½	*	1	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	7	2755
5	Evgeny Alekseev	IGM	RUS 2700	1	½	½	0	*	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	7	2760
6	Teimour Radjabov	IGM	AZE 2740	0	½	½	1	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	7	2757
7	Peter Leko	IGM	HUN 2735	0	½	½	0	1	½	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	6½	2729
8	Vugar Gashimov	IGM	AZE 2734	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	*	½	½	½	1	1	½	6½	2729
9	Wang Yue	IGM	CHN 2752	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	6½	2727
10	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR 2741	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	*	0	½	0	½	6	2699
11	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS 2735	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	*	½	0	½	6	2700
12	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR 2741	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	0	0	5½	2671
13	Ernesto Inarkiev	IGM	RUS 2669	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	*	0	5½	2677
14	Vladimir Akopian	IGM	ARM 2694	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	*	5½	2675

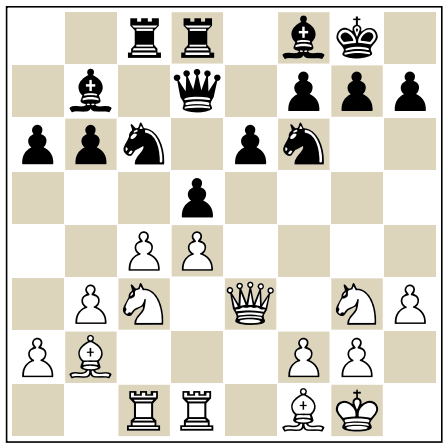
I should say that the idea partly justified itself. I did indeed manage to create a certain amount of tension, but I still couldn't completely equalize!



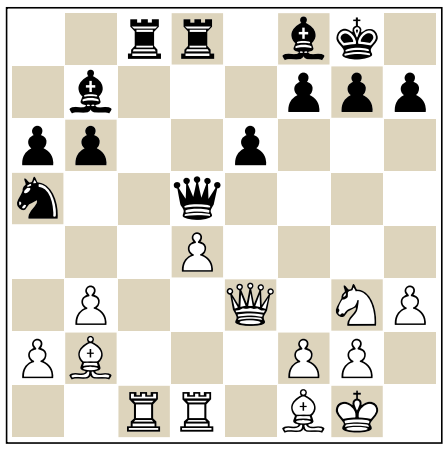
Eljanov-Leko
position after 18.h3

18...♕d7
Black has the more comfortable position. My knights create a strange impression, whilst Black's position is a picture of harmony. However, it is not easy to strengthen it.
19.♗e2 ♖ed8 20.♗f1!?
I did not see how to obtain any counterplay, and so I decided to invite Peter to take the initiative. Quite honestly, knowing Peter's character, and considering that he was also a bit short of time, I expected him to sit on his hands. However, my depressing score had its effect and Peter pressed forward.

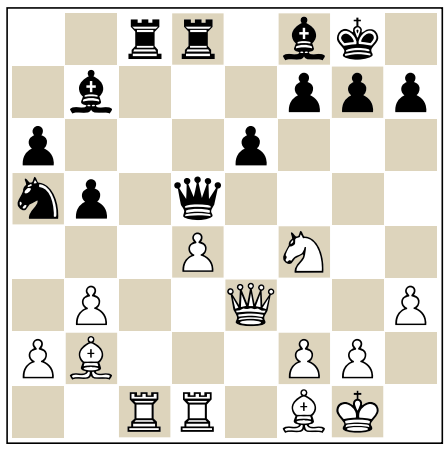
20...a6 It may be that playing in the same style with 20...h6!? was more unpleasant for White.
21.♘c3



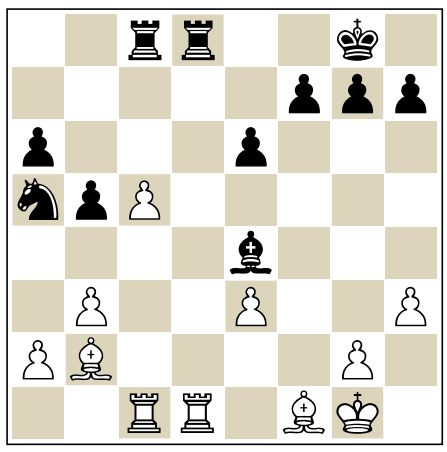
21...♘a5?! Too direct. I saw that 21...dxc4 22.bxc4 ♘xd4 23.♘b5 axb5 24.♗xd4 ♕e7 25.cxb5 ♘d5 26.♕b3 should be tolerable for White, but of course this is what should have been played.
22.cxd5! ♘xd5 23.♘xd5 ♕xd5



24.♘e2!
Black has missed this strong manoeuvre. He is still not worse, but the structure has changed, and he is the one who should be careful.
24...b5 25.♘f4



25...♕g5?
But this is a mistake. The endgame proves rather unpleasant. 25...♕d6 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♗d3 ♕b6, and Black should not have great problems.
26.♘d3 ♕xe3 27.fxe3 ♗e4 28.♘c5 ♗xc5 29.dxc5



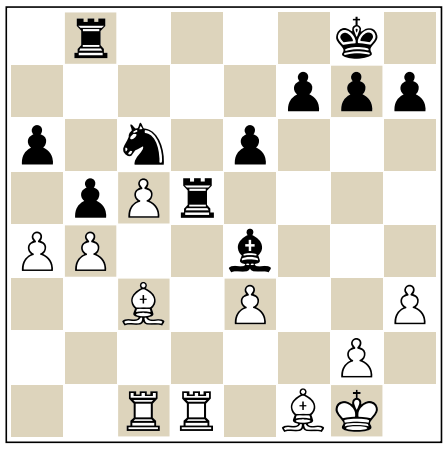
29...♖d5?!

A loss of time. Better was 29...f6, after which events develop in similar fashion to the game, but with a couple of extra tempi for Black.

30.♗c3! ♘c6 30...♖dxc5 loses on the spot to 31.b4, as Black has a back rank problem.

31.b4 ♖b8 32.a4

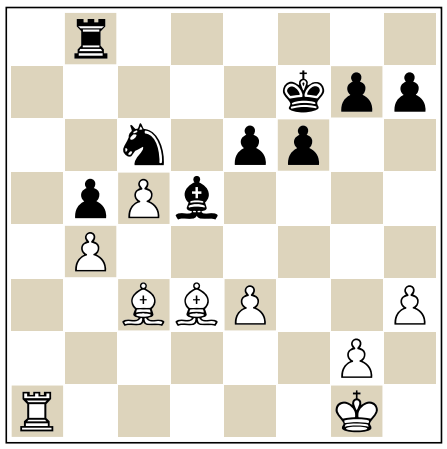
The most technically precise was 32.♖xd5 ♗xd5 33.♖a1!.



32...f6

The alternative was 32...bxa4 33.♗xa6 a3 34.♖a1! (34.b5 ♖xc5 35.bxc6 a2 36.♗a1 ♖xc6 37.♖xc6 ♗xc6 38.♔f2 ♗d5 is probably a draw) 34...♘xb4 35.♗xb4 ♖xd1+ 36.♖xd1 a2 37.♗c3 ♖b1 38.♖f1, and White should gradually win.

33.♖xd5 ♗xd5 34.axb5 axb5 35.♖a1 ♔f7 36.♗d3



36...♗c4?!

Black can defend by 36...f5 37.g4 g6 38.♔f2 ♔e7 39.♗e2, but here too, White should gradually be able to break down the barricades.

37.♗e4 ♗d5 38.♗d3 ♗c4 39.♗e4 ♗d5 40.♗xd5 exd5 41.♖a6 ♘e7 42.♖b6 d4 43.♗xd4

Black resigned.

After that game my task became simpler. My rivals weren't rushing to overtake me and it had become clear that draws in the next three games should be enough for success.

To be honest, I coped with the task quite easily. Actually I even had interesting opportunities to fight for the initiative (of course, with the powerful black colour!) in my games with the heavy-hitters – Ivanchuk and Gelfand – but I firmly followed my own directives.

The winner of second prize and a place in the Candidates matches was grandmaster Radjabov. Unexpectedly Wang Yue, who had been at the 50-percent mark for the whole tournament, had real chances to rise up, if he'd outplayed his direct rival in their individual encounter. But, unfortunately, an endgame where he had big chances for a win nevertheless ended peacefully. Vugar Gashimov has to be acknowledged as the tournament's biggest loser. Vugar played very decently up until the last three rounds. Even after losing to Ponomariov he had excellent chances in his games with Radjabov and Leko, and the half point that he scored in those two games was simply a case of bad luck.

Thanks to his result in Astrakhan, Teimour Radjabov finished overall second in the FIDE Grand Prix, thus qualifying for the Candidates' matches.

Finally, I want to thank the people who are closest to me – my parents and my wife Elena – for their all-round support and belief in me! I'm also very grateful to my friends Misha Roiz, who helped me in the tournament (and, I sensed, was as happy about my successes as if they were his own) and Borya Gelfand for our work together in recent years, which has given me the opportunity to reach a new level!

Ah, yes, I haven't forgotten: memento mori...

What to do when you're surrounded by **Vikings**?

Anish Giri keeps going from strength to strength. In the July 1 world rankings, the young Dutchman is the highest-ranked 16-year-old, with an Elo of 2672 thanks to an explosive gain in the past 12 months of an incredible 154 Elo points! Fourteen of those points he gathered at the traditional Sigeman tournament in Malmö. Surrounded by Vikings only, Giri went straight for victory in the first round-robin he entered as the top-seed. Giri is not only a wonderful player, but also an insightful and witty annotator. We're delighted that he analysed all five games from Malmö, games that will entertain you and teach you a lot of the thought processes of one of today's most amazing chess talents.

Anish Giri

This was the first time that I participated in the Sigeman & Co chess tournament, and the first time that I played on Scandinavian soil, Viking territory... the most famous chess Viking being Magnus Carlsen. The tournament, which takes place in Malmö, in the very south of Sweden, has already been going for 18 years, and has become a fine tradition. The first edition was held in 1993 or as Nigel Short, the winner of the previous edition, would say, 'That was before you were born...'

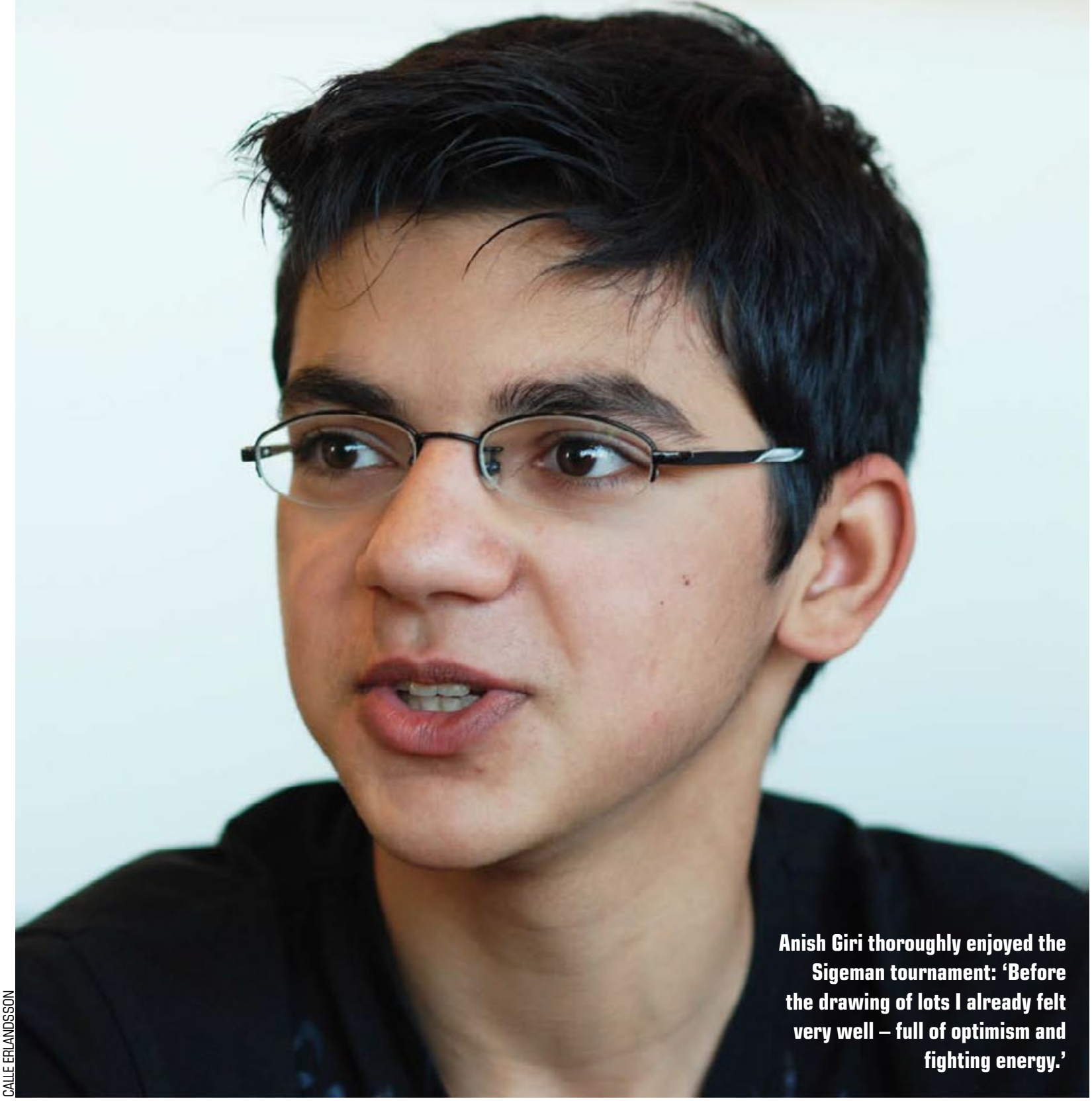
The venue was the city theatre of Malmö at a one-minute walk from the hotel where I was staying. Fortunately, no theatre performances took place during the tournament, which made it a perfect and comfortable venue.

The tournament formula was the same as last year: six players playing one round. But unlike the previous editions, which were a bit more multicultural, this time five out of six players were Scandinavians. As you may have guessed, that sixth player, who didn't belong to the Scandinavian family, was me. Besides myself (top-seed in a closed tournament for the first time), the players were Jon Ludvig Hammer, who is slowly getting to the top in the shadow of his famous country-mate Magnus Carlsen, Jonny Hector, a sharp Swedish player, Tiger Hillarp Persson, who is also Swedish, and perhaps even sharper, Pia Cramling, the winner of this year's Women's European Championship, and Nils Grandelius, the young Swedish talent who just scored his last grandmaster norm before the tournament.

So it was obvious that it would not be easy for me as the top-seed to live up to everyone's expectations. In retrospect, I can say that I managed, but clearly thanks to the luck that was on my side during the event.

Having three blacks in five games, which is obviously a disadvantage in such a short tournament, didn't really spoil my mood. Before the drawing of lots I already felt very well – full of optimism and fighting energy.

In the first round I had to play with black against Pia Cramling, who definitely wasn't regarded as an outsider at the start of the event.



CALLE ERLANDSSON

Anish Giri thoroughly enjoyed the Sigeman tournament: 'Before the drawing of lots I already felt very well – full of optimism and fighting energy.'

QO 16.9 – D24
Pia Cramling
Anish Giri
Malmö 2010 (1)

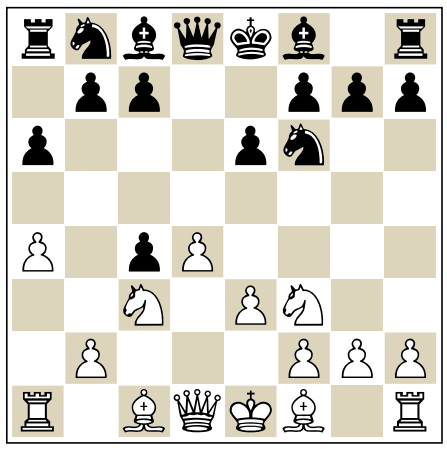
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 dxc4

I think the Vienna was a surprise for Pia, since I had mainly played the Slav before. I had decided recently to broaden my repertoire a bit.

5.e3

Without preparation, Pia decided not to test me in the sharp main line that starts with 5.e4.

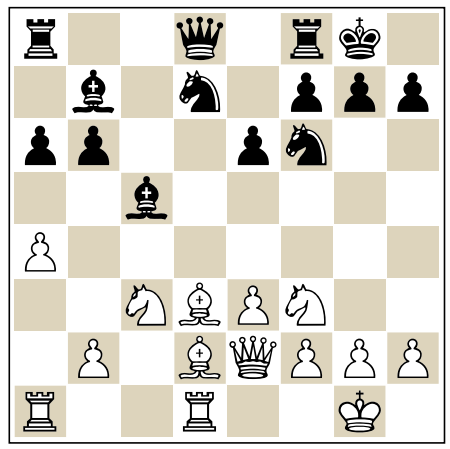
5...a6 6.a4



6...b6!?

6...c5 transposes to the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but I decided to go for another system.

7.♗xc4 ♗b7 8.0-0 ♗b4 9.♕e2 0-0 10.♖d1 ♘bd7 11.♗d3 c5 12. dxc5 ♗xc5 13.♗d2



13...♕b8!?

Here, having comfortably equalized, I decided to go for an ambitious plan based on ...♘e5, exchanging the knights and trying to create some initiative on the kingside.

13...♕e7 was possible, but I didn't like it because of 14.h3 ♖fd8 15.e4, and I would have no control over the e5-square.

14.♖ac1 ♖d8

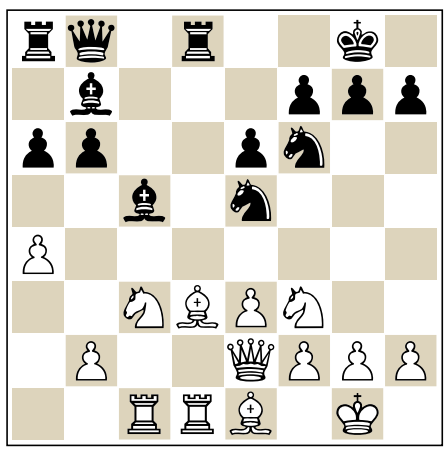
Not a mistake in itself, but played with the wrong intention.

The immediate 14...♘e5 was possible, but not dangerous for White: 15.♘xe5 ♕xe5 16.e4, and the position is about equal.

I should have played some other useful move, preparing ...♘e5, like 14...h6!? or 14...♖c8!?.

15.♗e1! Preventing 15...♘e5, but I didn't really get the idea behind the move...

15...♘e5?



A blunder, although surprisingly enough, it is not such a bad move objectively. I was already hoping to get this position when I played 13...♕b8, and due to my optimism I didn't really check it out too carefully. I should have played 15...h6.

16.♗xh7+!

She thought for a very long time before executing her move, and somehow I still didn't realize that this move actually worked.

16.♘xe5 ♕xe5 17.♗b1 h5! was what I was hoping for.

16...♘xh7

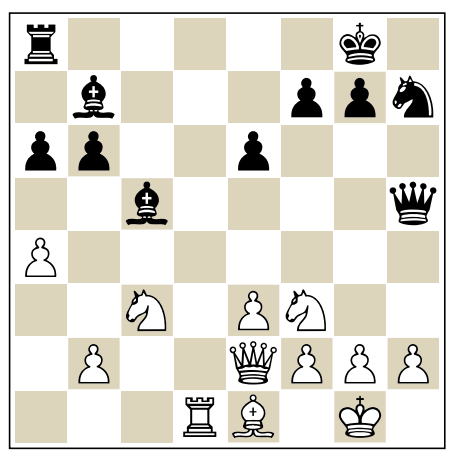
I quickly realized that even with a pawn down my position wasn't all that bad. I have two nice bishops, especially the one on b7, which no longer had a counterpart.

16...♔xh7 17.♖xd8 ♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3!! was what I had missed.

17.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 18.♘xe5 ♕g5 19.♘f3 ♕h5

I had a lot of other options trying to make ...♘g5 work, but in fact 20...♘g5 is no good, no matter where the queen goes.

20.♖d1



20...♘g5?!

Psychologically a good move, since I felt she would take no risk and just grab the knight. However, objectively it was a mistake.

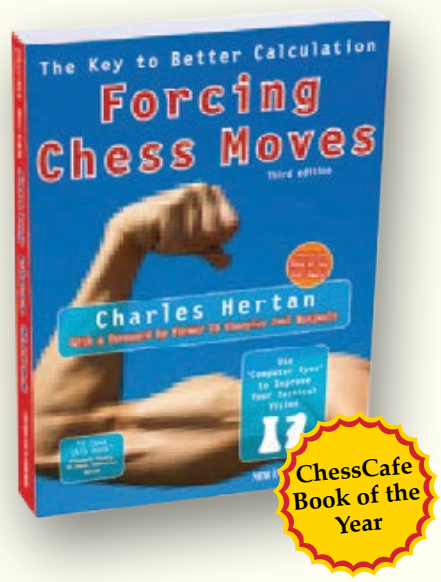
20...♘f6!? was the right move, just to play the position as if nothing had happened. I was a bit worried about the d-file, but White can't do anything concrete. Black has good compensation, for example 21.h3 ♖c8 22.e4?! is bad due to 22...b5!.

21.♘xg5?!

I wasn't surprised by the move, but rather by how quickly Pia played it. Normally she took a lot of time for every move, but this one she played almost instantly. Now Black can equalize comfortably, but I think Pia wasn't really against the draw anyway.

21.♘d2!? was possible, since after the planned 21...♕h4 White has 22.♔h1!, and there is no way I can use the bishop b7/king h1 nuance. However, after 21...♕h6 or 21...♕g6 Black still has compensation for the pawn, even though White is objectively better.

The best was 21.♘d4!, which was what I was afraid of. After desperately trying to make some tricks work, I thought that I had found a way to deal with the move, but



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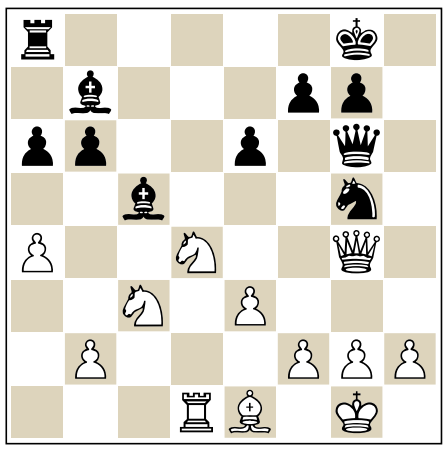
CALLE ERLANDSSON

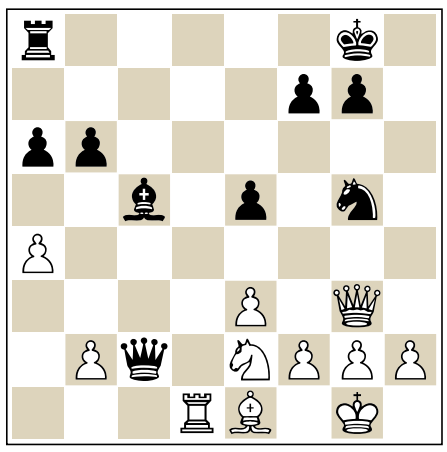
European Women's Champion Pia Cramling had a rough time in Malmö, but kept fighting till the end.

in fact there was a huge hole in my calculation: 21...♕g6 22.♕g4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22...e5 (my initial idea 22...f5 was better, but with precise play White will survive the attack and eventually get an advantage. To show how cold-blooded White has to be, I'll give you a sample line: 23.♕g3 e5 24.♘de2 ♕h6!? 25.♕xe5!? ♗xg2! – it looks as if Black is going to mate in a few moves, but the white king just runs to the queenside: 26.♔xg2 ♕h3+ 27.♔h1 ♕f3+ 28.♔g1 ♘h3+ 29.♔f1 ♕h1+ 30.♘g1 ♕xg1+ 31.♔e2 ♕g4+ 32.♔d2 ♖f8 33.♔c1, and now the king is more or less safe and the extra pawn will start to tell. However, the position is still far from hopeless for Black) 23.♘de2 ♗f3 – this was my point – 24.♕g3 ♗xe2 25.♘xe2 ♕c2, and somehow when playing 19...♕h5 I only saw

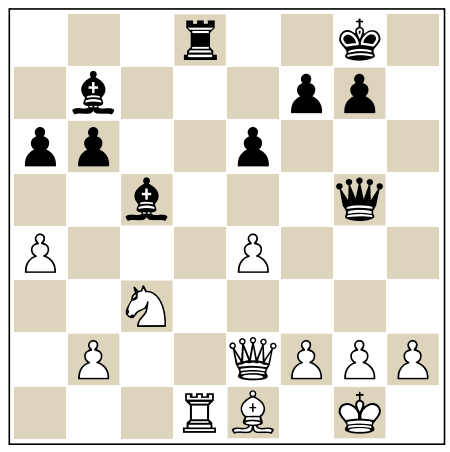


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♖d2, after which 26...♕b1 would win for Black. However, I had missed the simple 26.♘c3!, after which 26...♘e4 is met by 27.♕f3.

21...♕xg5 22.e4 ♖d8

This was the position I was aiming for when I took on h7 with the knight. The two bishops compensate for the missing pawn and White's e4 and a4 pawns are weak. The g2-square is also something White has to watch out for in case of ...f5.



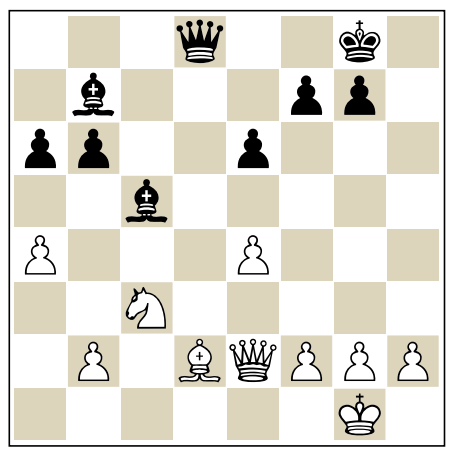
23.♖xd8+

23.♗d2 was a more ambitious possibility, but Black is fine after 23...♕e5 (or 23...♕g6!?) 24.♗e3!? (24.g3 f5!) 24...♖xd1+ 25.♕xd1 b5!, when White's back rank and weak e4 pawn enable Black to equalize.

23...♕xd8 24.♗d2?

Pia confessed that she had missed my next move, after which, objectively speaking, the position is still drawn, but White is already under pressure now.

24.♕d2 was what I had expected. Now I planned to make a draw with 24...♕d4 25.♕xd4 ♗xd4 26.♔f1 ♗xc3 27.♗xc3 ♗xe4.

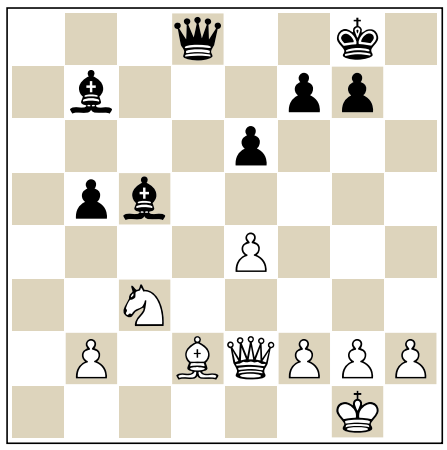


24...b5!

Such moves you make instantly.

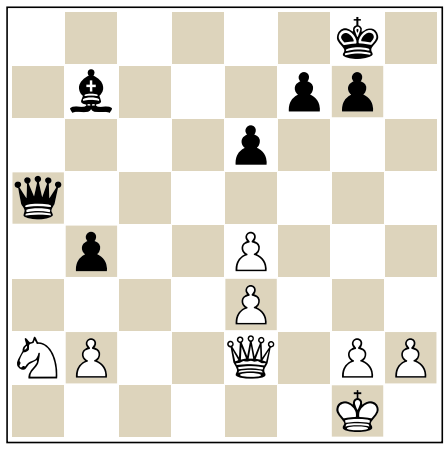
25.axb5 axb5

Here Pia thought for a very long time, and I realized that in fact she might be in trouble already. However, we both missed a beautiful way for White to force a draw.



26.h3?

The draw was there after 26.♗e3! ♗xe3 27.fxe3 b4 28.♘a2 ♕a5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

29.♕d2!! (the point – 29.♕c4 b3!) 29...♕xa2 30.♕d8+ ♔h7 31.♕h4+, with an amusing perpetual.

26...b4 27.♘a4?!

Another inaccuracy. But as Pia said after the game, it never rains but it pours.

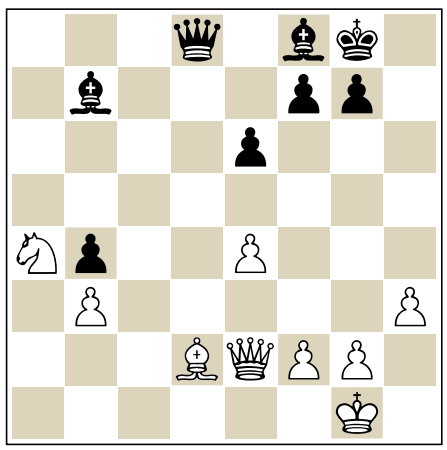
Better was 27.♘a2! ♕d4 28.♕e1! b3 29.♘c3 ♕d3, when it seems that White is in trouble, but she should hold after 30.♕d1 ♗xe4 31.♘xe4 ♕xe4 32.♗c3! (32.♕xb3 ♕b1+! wins).

27...♗f8

I like the idea of hiding the bishop and keeping the knight on a4 out of the game.

27...♗a7 seemed interesting to me, but then I realized that after 28.♗xb4 ♕d4 29.♕e1! ♗c6 White doesn't lose a piece in view of the simple 30.b3!.

28.b3



When I got to this position I was already more than optimistic, thinking that it would be just a matter of technique now to win the game. In fact, White is probably still able to hold, and it was no wonder that I didn't see a win for myself.

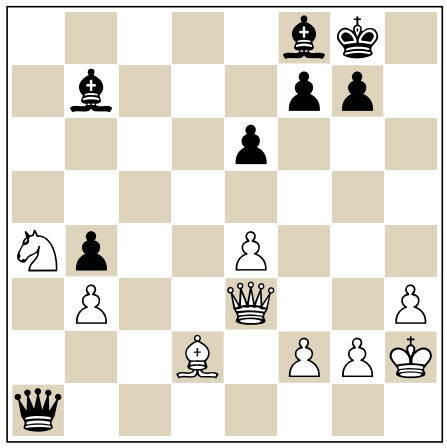
28...♕d4

28...♗c6!? is another try – probably a better one – with the idea of 29.♘b2 ♕a8!. I missed it, only considering the logical ...♕d4.

29.♕e3! ♕a1+

29...♕xe4 30.♕xe4 ♗xe4 or any other version of this endgame was the best thing I could think of, but I wanted to get more and I started burning my time...

30.♔h2

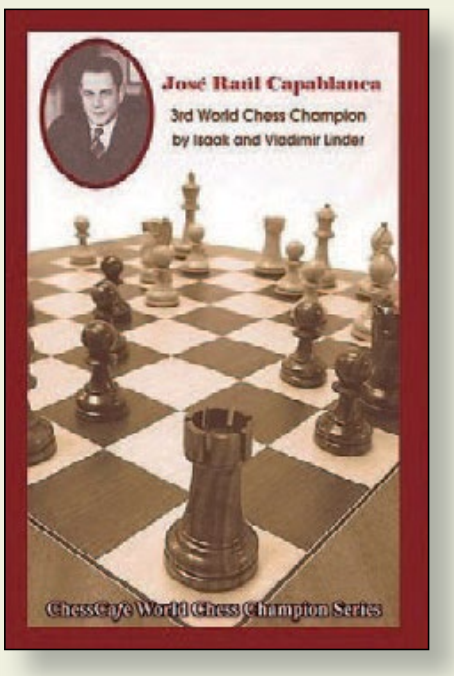


30...♗d6+

Out of too much cleverness...

30...♗c6 31.♘b6 ♕e5+ 32.♔g1 ♗c5 33.♘c4! ♕a1+ 34.♕e1 ♕xe1+ 35.♗xe1 ♗xe4 36.♗d2 is again a similar endgame, which I should have gone for, objectively.

31.f4



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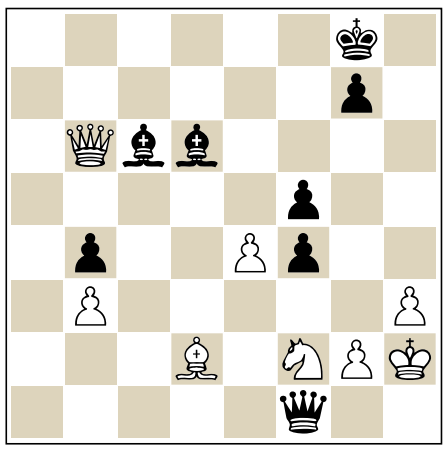
Here, unsurprisingly, I failed to find any real winning chances. I calculated all the complicated stuff, using a lot of time, and I must say I did a pretty good job. The only problem was that objectively White would simply hold in all cases...

31...♕b1

Realizing that I had nothing better, I went for this move.

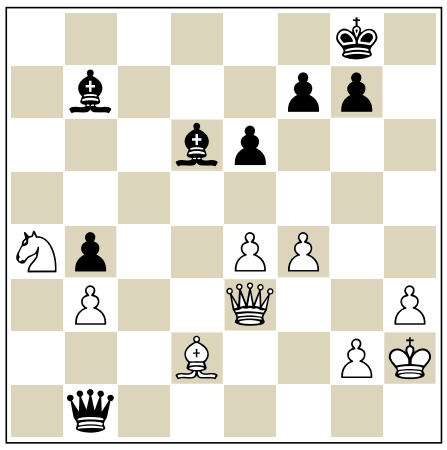
31...♕f1 is the line I wasted most of my time on: 32.♘c5 ♗c6 33.♘d3 f5! 34.♘f2 e5!? 35.♕b6 exf4.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I had seen this far and I was even about to play it. 36.♕xc6 is met by 36...f3+, with a beautiful mate. I was pretty proud of my calculations till I realized that White simply has 36.♕d8+!, and funnily enough Black is still OK here, but of course no more.

31...♕d1 was my initial hope, but then I realized belatedly that White had 32.♕b6! ♕xd2 33.♕d8+ ♔h7 34.♕h4+, with a unique perpetual.



32.♘b6??

I was totally shocked here. The move is so obviously bad that I couldn't even understand where Pia got the idea to play it. The knight's only future was on c5: 32.♘c5! ♗xc5 33.♕xc5 ♕xe4 34.♕f2 ♗d5. Here it seemed to me that I still had some practical chances, but with the precise 35.♕f3! White secures the draw instantly: 35...♕c2 36.♕e3.

32...♗xe4 33.♘c4

33.♕d4!? might have been a trickier try, but I saw the right move for Black: 33...♗c7! (33...♗e7 34.♘c8!) 34.♘c4 ♗c6 (not 34...♕c2? 35.♘e5 f6? 36.♕d7!, and it is suddenly a draw) 35.♘e3 ♕a2 36.♘c4 ♗d5, and Black is close to winning. But White should still have tried 33.♕d4.

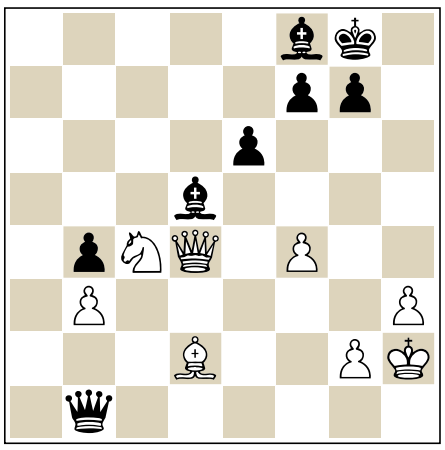
33...♗f8

33...♗e7 may be a bit more accurate.

34.♕d4

34.♘e5!? would cause me some practical trouble: 34...f6 (34...♗d5? 35.♕a7!) 35.♘c6! e5! 36.♘xb4 f5! 37.fxe5 ♕f1 38.♕g5 f4, winning.

34...♗d5



Now it's all over.

35.♕e3 ♕f1 36.♕g1 ♗xc4 37.bxc4 ♕xg1+ 38.♔xg1 b3 39.♗c1 ♗c5+ 40.♔f1 ♗d4 41.c5 ♔f8!

The last accurate move. White resigned. Such a game leaves a good impression with people who just scroll through the game in the live transmission, and I felt a bit embarrassed when some people told me: 'Nice pawn sac on h7! Very deep!'...

This was obviously a nice way to start. I felt that luck was on my side. The second game, against Nils, confirmed that hypothesis.

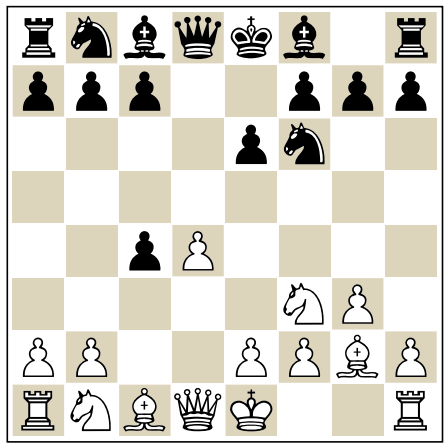
CA 3.1 – E04
Anish Giri
Nils Grandelius
Malmö 2010 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3

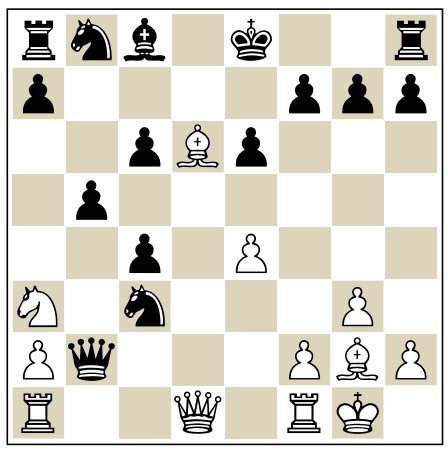
After the Anand-Topalov match, who wouldn't play the Catalan?

4...dxc4 5.♗g2

I did know that some sharp line of the Catalan would appear on the board, since I know that Nils is completely fearless, but the line he played was the only one that I forgot to re-check before the game... As usual...



5...c6!? 6.♘e5 ♗b4+ 7.♗d2 ♕xd4 8.♗xb4 ♕xe5 9.♘a3 b5 10.♗d6!? ♕xb2 11.0-0 ♘d5 12.e4 ♘c3



So far White had a lot of ways to deviate, but I remembered that this was the line I liked most for White. Here I stopped blitzing out my moves for a second, try-

ing to remember which move to play, 13.♕h5 or 13.♕g4. In order not to lose the rhythm I quickly convinced myself that 13.♕g4 was the right one and I quickly played it.

13.♕g4?

I had a 50 per cent chance, so it wasn't a big surprise that I made the wrong choice. Perhaps I should have started calculating some lines... with twice the chance that I would have played the right move.

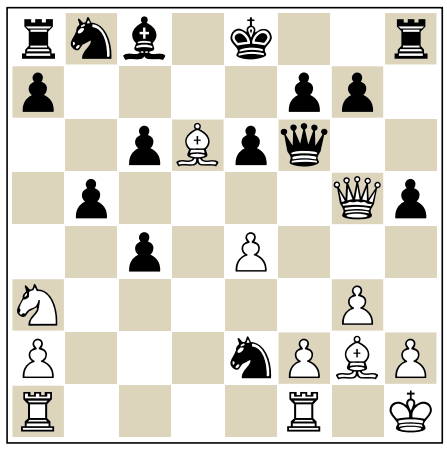
As I saw later, 13.♕h5 is the move I have a huge file on...

13...h5!

Here I realized that something had gone wrong...

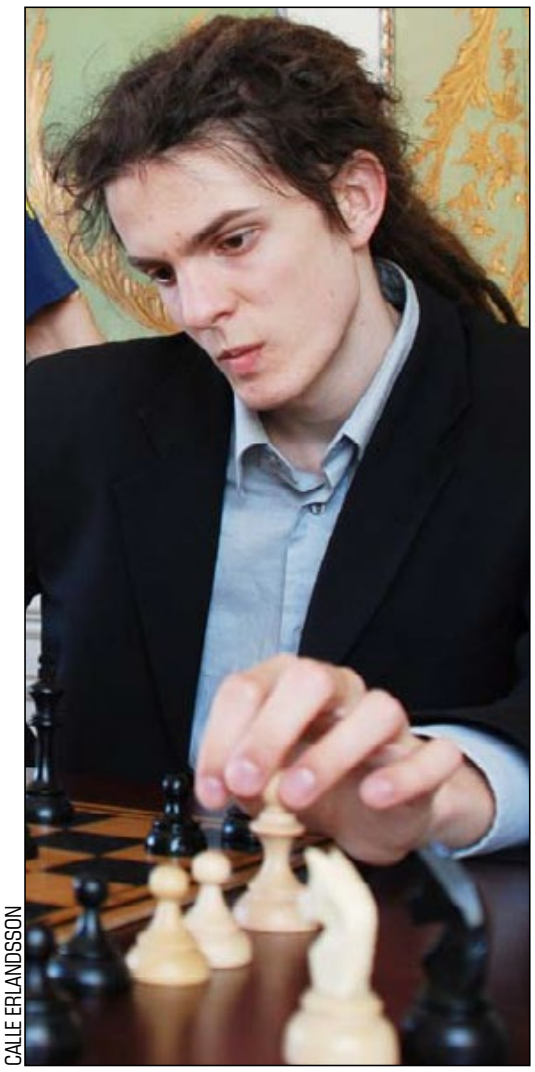
14.♕g5 ♘e2+ 15.♔h1 ♕f6

Once again I had to move the queen, and even though I was already thinking hard, I again chose the wrong square.



16.♕d2?

The correct square was 16.♕e3! e5 (16...♕d4 was Nils's intention – still within his preparation) 17.♗xb8 ♘d4 18.♗c7 h4 19.



CALLE ERLANDSSON

Nils Grandelius spoiled a highly promising position and was punished in a sweeping counter-attack.

♖fe1 (19.♖ad1 ♗g4!) 19...♗g4, and Black has a dangerous initiative, although the game is far from over.

16...e5!

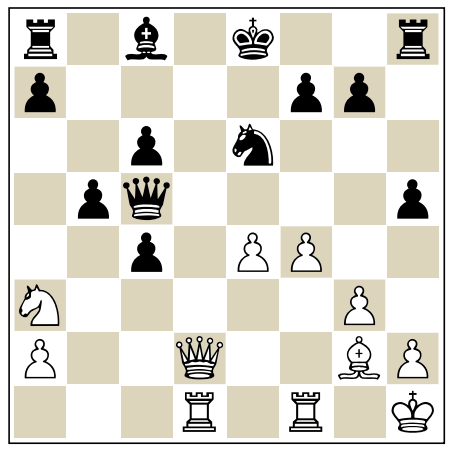
What I had missed you can see in my comments to move 21.

16...♕d4 was the move that I considered most seriously: 17.♕xd4 (17.♖fd1 ♕xd2 18.♖xd2 ♘c3 19.♖c1 ♘a4 20.♘xb5 cxb5 21.e5 ♗d7! 22.♗xa8 ♗c6+ is Black's idea, with advantage) 17...♘xd4 18.♗e5 ♘e2 19.♖ae1 f6 20.♗a1 (20.♗xb8 also wins a piece, but I wanted to keep my bishop) 20...♘xg3+ 21.hxg3! e5 22.f4, and the game goes on, although Black should be better objectively, thanks to all his pawns and the shame on g2.

17.♗xb8 ♘d4 18.♗xe5

18.♗c7 loses, though I must say I didn't see a concrete win for Black: 18...h4 19.gxh4 ♘f3! (I missed this one, but anyway, it was not the only thing I missed...) 20.♕d8+ ♕xd8 21.♗xd8 ♗g4! – the whole point. Now Black wins.

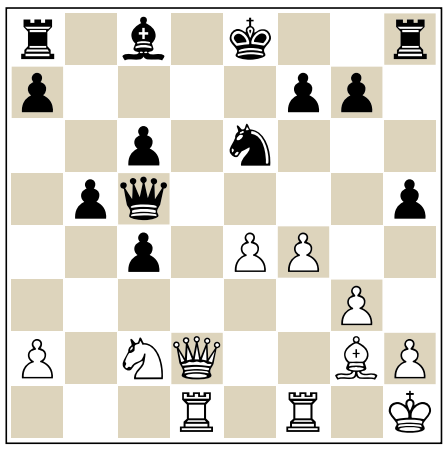
18...♕xe5 19.♖ad1 ♘e6 20.f4 ♕c5



21.♘c2

Here I was happy with two things. First of all, my opponent was finally thinking, and secondly I am not totally lost yet. Although I wasn't quite sure about the second one.

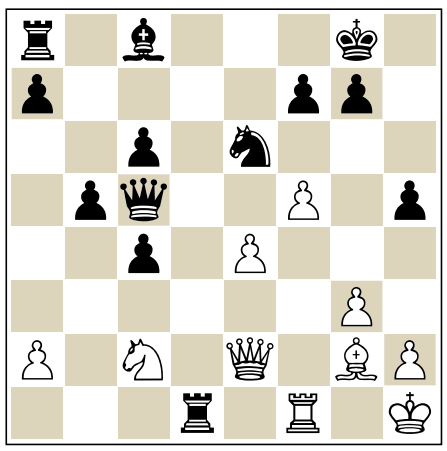
From a distance I had missed that after 21.f5 ♕xa3 22.fxe6 Black can grab the pawn with the bishop, protecting the d8-square. The first two rounds I wasn't really in shape, missing all kinds of things.



21...h4??

I can understand why Nils, who is a sharp attacking player, played this move. Obviously, with your queen on c5, a pawn on h5 and a rook on h8 you want to mate, but in fact it's a horrible move, not only objectively but also psychologically. Now White is back in the game, and even though the position is still objectively better for Black, it all gets very irrational and double-edged.

21...0-0 was simple and easy. After 22.f5 ♖d8! 23.♕e2 ♖xd1 White has a choice. Either to go all the way and try to mate Black, or to try and prevent Black's pawn from queening. Neither option works...



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

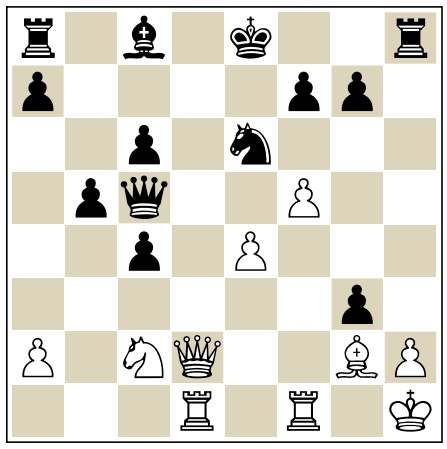
– 24.♖xd1 ♘f8 25.♕xh5 b4 26.♕f3 a5 27.♗f1, and Black will eventually win this.

– 24.♕xd1 ♘f8 25.♕xh5 b4 26.♖f4. This is what I was trying to calculate. White seems to have some chances, but in fact he is totally lost: 26...b3 27.♖h4 f6, and White has no mate, only a couple of checks and some hope. (However, the computer's 27...♘g6!! wins on the spot: 28.♕h7+ ♔f8 29.fxg6 bxc2.)

22.f5!?

22.gxh4 was not bad either: 22...0-0 23.f5 ♖d8 24.♕c1 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♘f8 26.h5, and White has a lot of play against the black king. But I liked 22.f5 better.

22...hxg3



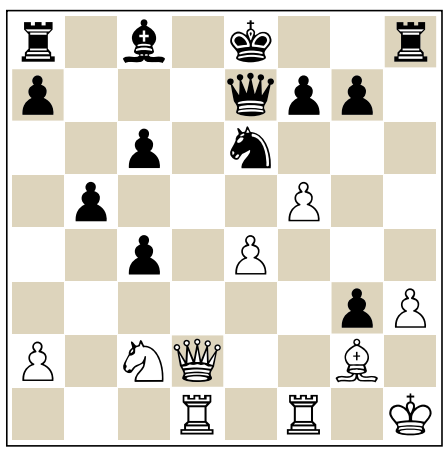
23.h3!

Now Black had to accept the fact that 21...h4 was a bad move and that he should castle. Realizing that Nils might realize this, I got a little upset. However, with his next move he made me happy again.

23...♕e7?

Another very big mistake. Nils doesn't want to move his rook from h8 and his king from e8.

Best was 23...0-0! 24.♕c3! (I liked this move, to keep my attacking possibilities – 24.fxe6 ♗xe6 is unclear, but Black is comfortable) 24...♖d8! 25.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 26.e5, and the result is unpredictable.



24.e5!

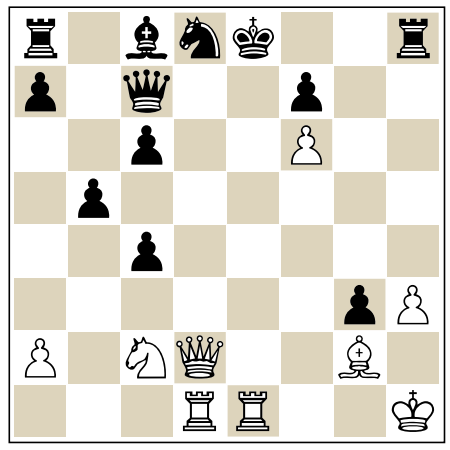
I think Nils had missed the fact that I don't have to take his knight, back when he played 21...h4.

24...♘d8?

This loses; but it was already psychologically hard to castle. I must also say that there was only one way to win this position, even though I actually thought that I would win it any old how.

25.f6! gxf6 After 25...♕c7 White wins with 26.fxg7 ♖g8 27.♕h6.

26.exf6 ♕c7 27.♖fe1+

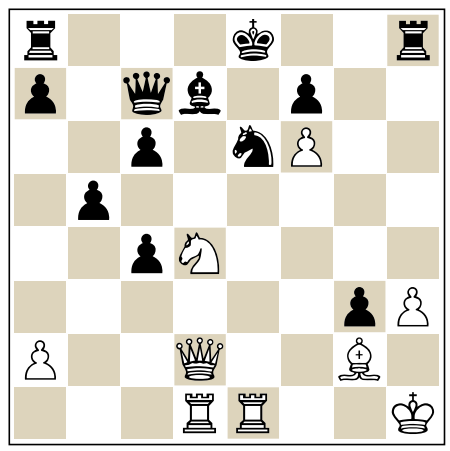


27...♘e6

Here I had a cold shock realizing that after the planned ♘d4-f5 manoeuvre, Black would just castle long. I immediately started blaming myself for playing f6 too quickly, but then I hit on the winning idea.

Alternatively, 27...♗e6 28.♘d4 ♖h5 29.♕e2! also wins for White, as Black is completely pinned.

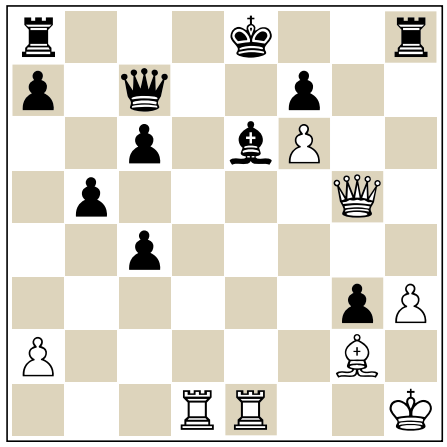
28.♘d4 ♗d7 28...♔f8 loses to 29.♘xe6+ ♗xe6 30.♕g5 ♖h7 31.♗e4! ♗d5 32.♖xd5.



29.♘xe6!

Just killing the defender and preventing queenside castling. Black is hopelessly lost.

29...♗xe6 29...fxe6 30.f7+ ♔f8 (30...♔d8 31.♕h6!) 31.♕xd7 ♕xd7 32.♖xd7 is also an easy win.
30.♕g5

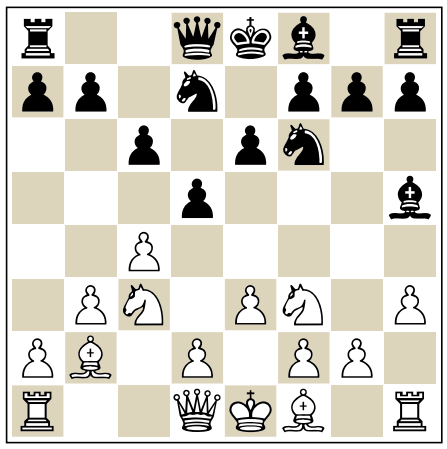


30...♖f8
Black had no defence anyway, but Nils is a generous opponent and gave me the opportunity to mate him.
30...♖c8 looks like the most stubborn move, although White wins anyhow: 31.♕g7 ♖f8, and now 32.♗f3 is easiest, while 32.♖e4 is more elegant: 32...c3 33.♖h4, and there is no way to prevent ♕xf8+ and ♖h8 mate.
31.♖xe6+ fxe6 32.♕g6+ ♕f7 33.♗xc6 Mate.
Again it looked like a smooth win, but the reader already knows how it all actually happened.

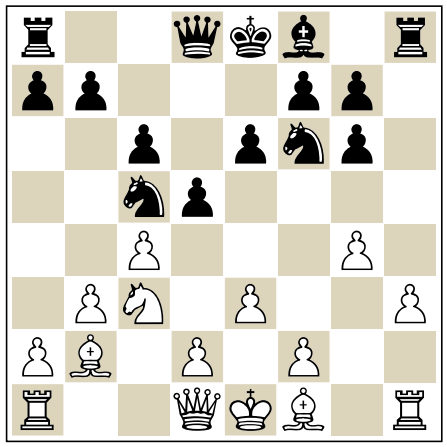
Two lucky wins motivated me not only to work better at the board and calculate more precisely, but also to go to bed earlier, get more fresh air, etc. This 'regime' seemed to work, because my next game was one I was really proud of.

RE 7.8 – A12
Tiger Hillarp Persson
Anish Giri
Malmö 2010 (3)

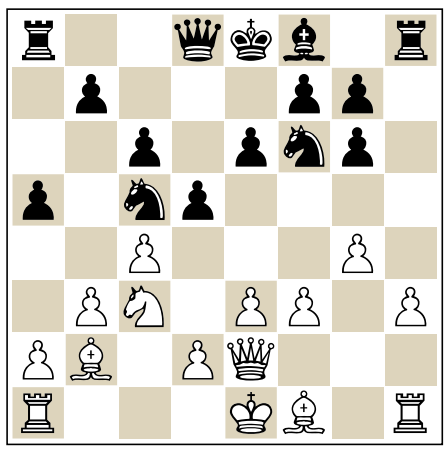
I was completely outplayed by Tiger with white last year in Corus, so this time I tried to do my best and have my revenge.
1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 d5
I was ready to play the Slav, but Tiger, who had lost almost all his recent games against it with white, decided to avoid it.
3.b3
In my opinion, this is the most harmless version of all possible e3 set-ups. Tiger just wanted to get some position and play chess.
3...♗g4 4.e3 e6 5.♗b2 ♘d7 6.h3 ♗h5
I didn't like 6...♗xf3 because of things like 7.♕xf3 ♘gf6 8.g4!?, although Black is totally fine.
7.♘c3 ♘gf6



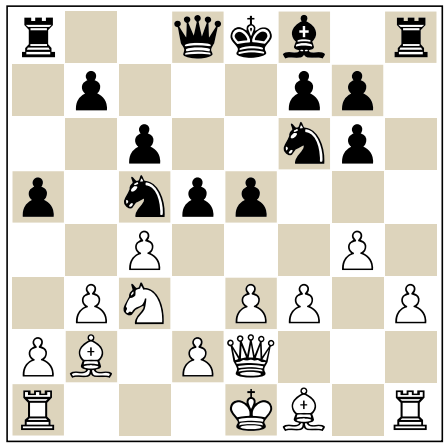
8.g4 Ambitious and risky. 8.♗e2 is the main move, but of course White is not fighting for any advantage this way.
8...♗g6 9.♘h4 ♘c5!?
When I saw this move, I immediately liked it very much. Strangely enough, it had already been played once before, by grandmaster Stripunsky two months before this game.
10.♘xg6 hxg6



11.♕e2
This was a little surprise for me, but I didn't see a way for him to get any advantage whatsoever.
After 11.cxd5 I planned to recapture with the knight, but 11...exd5 is also possible.
11...a5!?
I played this move almost instantly, as I somehow very much liked the idea of preventing him from castling queenside.
11...d4 was the obvious move, but I didn't like it: 12.exd4 ♕xd4 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 14.f3!, with approximate equality after 14...♘d3+ 15.♕xd3 ♕xd3 16.♗xd3 ♖xd3 17.♖df1.
12.f3!?
White hardly has any other useful moves. Now at least he is threatening d4, and Black has to take some sort of decision.



12...e5!
A highly ambitious and risky try, but I felt confident enough. In fact, White is already under pressure here, and he could easily be worse, without having made any obvious mistakes.



13.g5?!
This is clearly bad, and White should have tried something else. However, even after analysing this position for a long time we failed

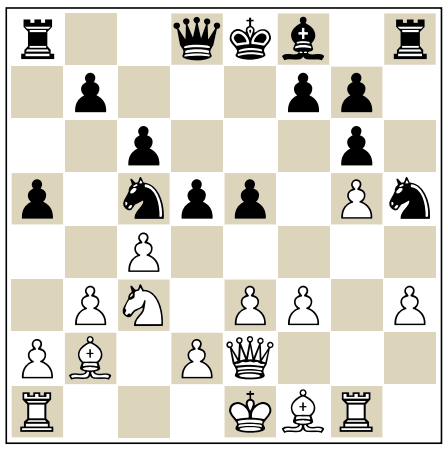
CALLE ERLANDSSON

Tiger Hillarp Persson 'just wanted to get some position and play chess', but after a mere 14 moves he was busted with white.

to find any reasonable option for White with which he can fight for an advantage, or at least get a comfortable position.

13...♘h5 14.♖g1

Here 14.♕h2 worried me a bit, but in fact I had a simple solution: 14...♕xg5 15.cxd5 ♘g3 16.♖g1 ♘xf1!. Now that the queen on h2 is hanging, Black is able to unpin and get a large advantage: 17.♔xf1 ♕f5.



14...d4! Now White is busted. I was very proud of my position, and not without reason.

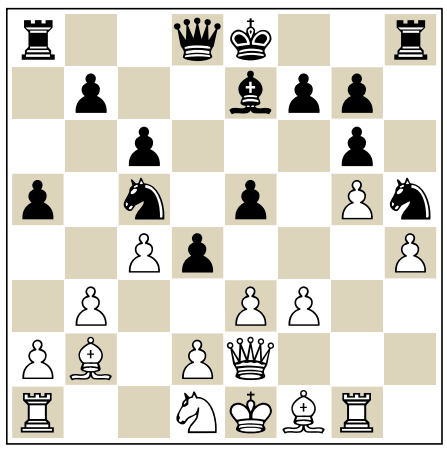
15.♘d1

Other moves were even worse: 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.fxe4 ♗c5 and 15.♘a4 ♘xa4 16.bxa4 ♗c5 are both hopeless. Black has the dark squares and the white king has nowhere to hide.

15...♗e7

15...♘e6 was also good, but I already had my piece sacrifice in mind and I also saw some ghosts like 16.f4, and so on...

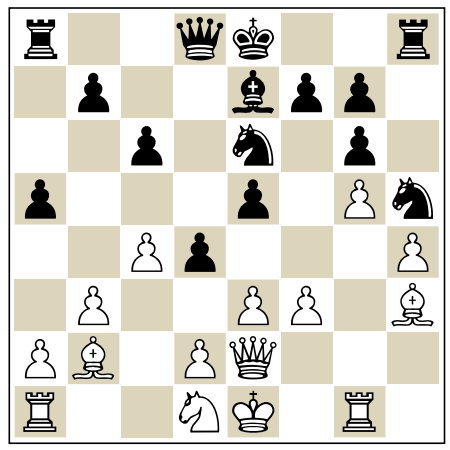
16.h4



16...♘e6!?

16...f5!? was another idea that I liked very much, but unfortunately I missed that after 17.gxf6 (17.♘f2 0-0 is a nightmare for White) 17...♗xf6 18.♘f2 I have 18...e4!, with the threat of ...d3.

17.♗h3

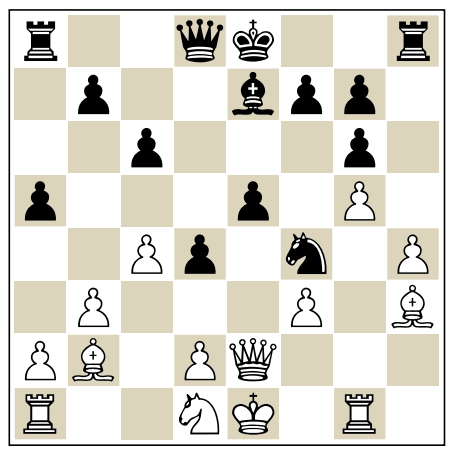


17...♘hf4!

A positional piece sacrifice that I thought would be the most practical way to win. I was sure that Tiger would get disgusted with his position and, considering his time-trouble, I didn't hesitate.

17...dxe3 is suggested by the engine, but was obviously not my plan.

18.exf4 ♘xf4



19.♕f1

19.♕h2!? would be a bit tricky, but objectively White would still be in trouble: 19...a4! (19...♖xh4?? 20.♗d7+! is the trap that Black should avoid; 19...f5!? is also a possibility) 20.♘f2 axb3 21.axb3 (21.a4 f5 is also not good) 21...♖xa1+ 22.♗xa1 c5!? – now there is no ♗xd4 after ...♕a5(a8), so White's bishop is doomed and all his pieces are awkward.

19...♖xh4

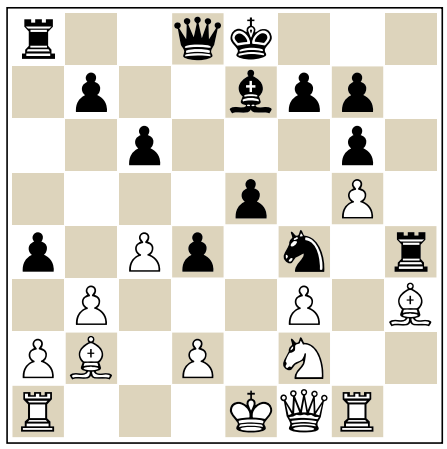
19...a4!? immediately was also possible.

20.♘f2

20.♖h1 was better, but it was bad as well: 20...♗xg5 21.♘f2 a4 22.0-0-0 axb3 23.axb3 d3! 24.♖e1

♕b6 25.♖xe5+ ♔d8 is pretty cold-blooded and winning.

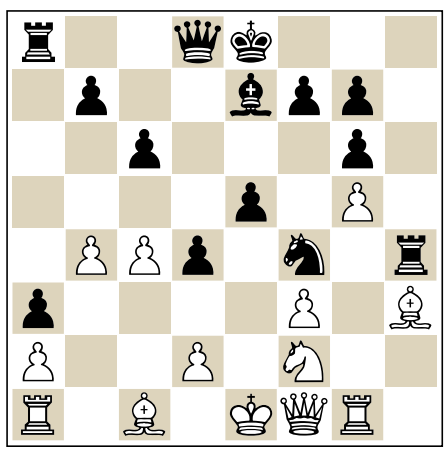
20...a4



21.b4

Other moves would lose as well. I had seen 21.♖h1 axb3!?, but I wasn't sure I would need to take such measures: 22.♗d7+ ♔xd7! 23.♖xh4 ♗xg5 24.♖xf4! ♗xf4 25.♕d3.

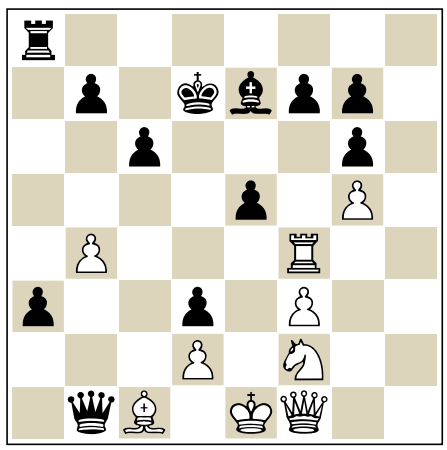
21...a3! 22.♗c1



22...d3!

I was delighted to be able to execute such moves. In Russian, you even have a special term for pawns like a3 and d3.

23.♖b1 ♕d4 24.♖h1 ♕xc4! Winning by force. **25.♗d7+ ♔xd7 26.♖xh4 ♕xa2! 27.♖xf4 ♕xb1**



CALLE ERLANDSSON

Jonny Hector is known for his sharp and uncompromising style, but the Swede gladly used the white pieces to go for half a point, the only draw Anish Giri conceded.

And accidentally d3 is protected...

28.♖xf7 ♕xc1+ 29.♘d1 ♕c4

White resigned. It was a pleasure to play such a game!

After this game I became the sole leader, but there were two more tough opponents to be faced, and Jon Ludvig was chasing me at half a point's distance. Against Jonny Hector I was expecting a crazy game with Jonny going all out, since in case of a win he would have good chances for first place. However, he decided to put an end to my 100 percent score without giving me any chance...

KP 11.11 – C48
Jonny Hector
Anish Giri
Malmö 2010 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3

This wasn't a surprise yet. Jonny has often played the Four Knights.

3...♘c6

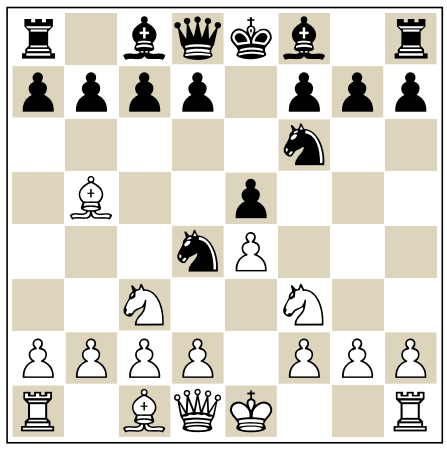
I had played 3...♗b4 earlier, but this time I decided to vary a bit.

4.♗b5

Jonny normally plays 4.g3 or 4.d4, but I wasn't entirely shocked when he chose the main move 4.♗b5, since it is considered to be the only try to fight for an advantage.

4...♘d4

Here I started remembering all my analysis on the sharp lines, but Jonny interrupted me with...



5.♘xd4

I had always known that such a move existed, but I couldn't really imagine that Hector would play it. The main purpose of the move is to make a draw.

5...exd4 6.e5 dxc3 7.exf6 ♕xf6 8.dxc3 ♕e5+

8...♗c5 is maybe even easier.

9.♗e2

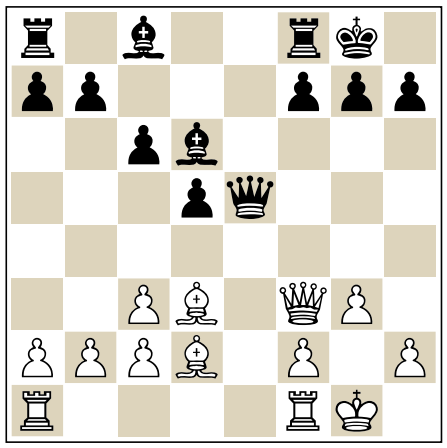
A bit tricky. 9.♕e2 is played more often, and normally the draw is agreed in a couple of moves.

9...♗c5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗d3

Here I actually had to find a precise way to totally equalize.

11...d5 12.♕f3 ♗d6 13.g3 c6 14.♗d2

14.♗f4 is met by 14...♕f6.



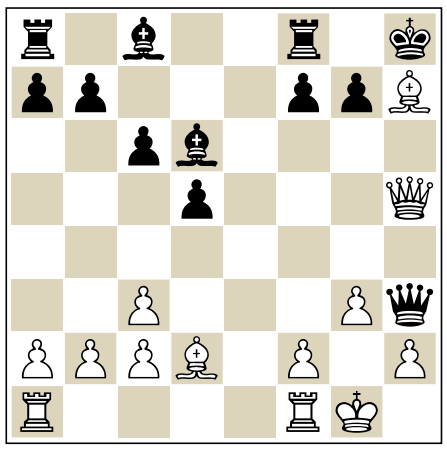
14...♕e6!

This is the equalizing idea.

15.♕h5 ♕h3

I decided to play this nice move just because I liked the beautiful repetition. Something simple like 15...h6 would draw, too.

16.♗xh7+ ♔h8



17.♗g6+

The exchange sac 17.♕xh3 ♗xh3 18.♗d3 ♗xf1 19.♔xf1 was actually possible, but it is clear that White can't fight for an advantage this way. And it was obvious that Jonny wouldn't even think about it.

17...♔g8 18.♗h7+ ♔h8

Draw. I wasn't really surprised to find out that exactly the same game had already been played back in 1984.

So basically I was having some sort of a rest day before the last round, and since Hammer managed to bring down Tiger, who seemed to be not really in shape (although in the last round he played a fantastic game against Cramling), he joined me in the lead, and our last-round game was to be the decider. I was White and opened with another Catalan.

CA 5.6 – E05
Anish Giri
Jon Ludvig Hammer
Malmö 2010 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3

I decided to repeat the Catalan, particularly because I had some idea in the line that Jon Ludvig had played against Nils earlier in this tournament.

4...♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♕c2 a6

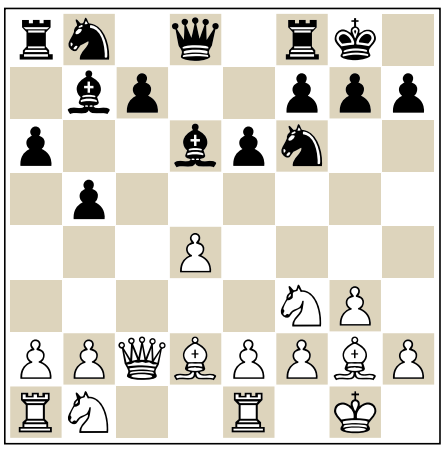
Maybe this is the main line of the Catalan. Or at least one of them. I had quite a few ideas here that were waiting for their moment.

8.♕xc4 b5 9.♕c2 ♗b7 10.♗d2 ♗d6

A popular try. It was played by the main Viking, Carlsen, so it wasn't a surprise that his compatriot Hammer started playing it too.

11.♖e1

One of the main moves. 11.♘g5 was played in Grandelius-Hammer earlier in this tournament.



11...♗e4 12.♕c1 ♗b7

A typical manoeuvre. Black is preventing e4.

12...♘bd7 is met by the typical 13.♗a5.

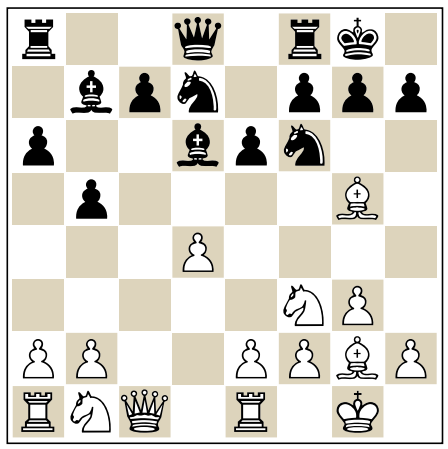
13.♕c2

A little joke... But actually I was curious how Jon Ludvig would react and what kind of emotions he would show. Also, sometimes I like to annoy my opponents a bit.

13...♗e4 14.♕c1 ♗b7

Jon Ludvig instantly repeated...

15.♗g5 ♘bd7



16.♘bd2!?

A move that was only played once before in a game of Wang Yue versus Carlsen. Carlsen easily equalized, so I was hoping that Hammer hadn't spent much time on this position.

16.e4 used to be the main move here. However, I am not sure whether White has an advantage here. With the undeveloped knight 16.e4 may be not that dangerous for Black.

16...h6

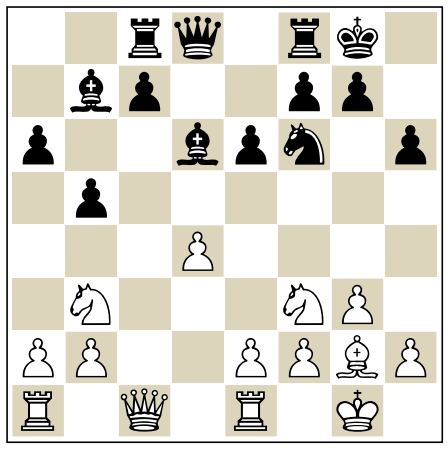
Not really a move Black wants to play, which is why 16.♘bd2 drew my attention.

16...c5 would of course be a perfect move, but unfortunately for Black White has 17.♗xf6! – a pretty typical idea. Now Black has to compromise his structure, which is not what he wants: 17...gxf6 (17...♕xf6? 18.♘e5!, winning the exchange, is the point.)

17.♗xf6 ♘xf6 18.♘b3

Now the c5-square seems to be temporarily in White's control, which is White's main idea in this line.

18...♖c8



19.♖d1!?

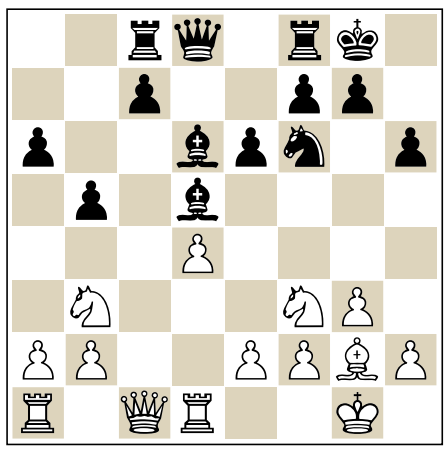
An attempt to improve on Wang Yue's play. I took some time before playing this move – for the psychological effect.

19.♘c5 ♗xc5 20.♕xc5 ♘e4 21.♕a3 c5 was played in Wang Yue-Carlsen, Leon rapid 2009, with a draw.

19...♗d5

Hammer was still in his preparation. I wasn't really surprised yet.

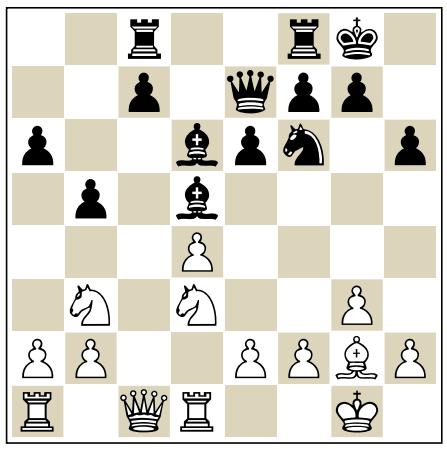
19...♕e7 is logical but doesn't solve all Black's problems: 20.♘c5! (20.♘a5 seems good, but in fact it can be met by 20...c5!, protecting the b7 bishop) 20...♗xc5 21.♕xc5! ♕xc5 22.dxc5, and the ending is disgusting for Black.



20.♘e1!

I played this move instantly. I remember I was very proud of myself entering the move in ChessBase and feeling cleverer than my engine. Not surprisingly, Jon Ludvig started thinking here. Black has to do something, otherwise, if I get my knight to d3 and c5, Black will be in trouble. I think Hammer had a look at 20.♘e5, with the same idea, but then Black frees himself with 20...c5.

20...♕e7 21.♘d3



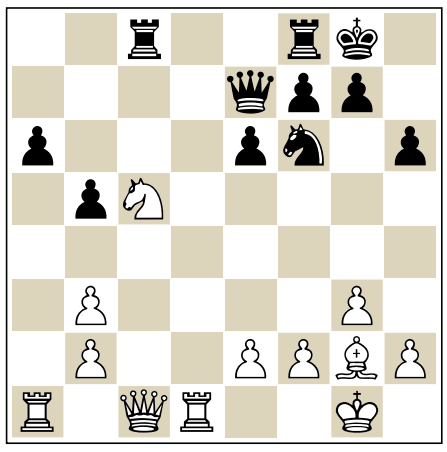
21...♗xb3!

Hammer took the right decision: to push ...c5 by any means. Any other plan would allow me to put the knight on c5, with an everlasting grip.

21...♗xg2 22.♔xg2 e5 also made sense, but it is not good because White has 23.dxe5 ♗xe5 24.♕e3!, and Black is in deep trouble after 24...♖fe8 25.♖ac1.

22.axb3 c5 23.dxc5 ♗xc5 24.♘xc5

I had other options for my queen, but I thought it would be simpler to take the bishop, and then I didn't see how Black could save his a-pawn. In fact, Black has a way to save the pawn, or to be more precise, exchange it, but during the game I didn't see it.



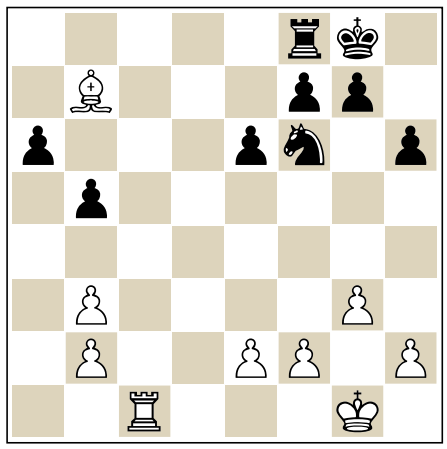
24...♕xc5?

Surprisingly enough, Jon Ludvig had missed my next move.

24...♖xc5! was better: 25.♕d2 ♕c7! (Black had to see this move and not fall into the trap with the natural 25...♖fc8 26.♖xa6 ♖c2 27.♖a8!, which was the reason I went for 24.♘xc5) 26.♖xa6 ♖c2, and here White has some slight advantage after 27.♕d3 or probably 27.♕d4, but I believe Black should make a draw without too much trouble.

25.♗b7! ♕xc1 26.♖dxc1 ♖xc1+ 27.♖xc1

This is how far my calculations went. I thought I would probably win a pawn and get winning chances.



27...♖b8

A strong move, or so we both thought during the game. I got very upset here, since I realized that taking the pawn would be met by 28...♖b6, when my bishop would have no easy escape, giving Black all the time in the world to get counterplay and win one of my b-pawns. After spending some minutes I was ready to make a draw with some move like 28.♖c7, but then I forced myself to calculate the ridiculous pawn capture. Only after a long think did I realize that I had a very strong manoeuvre: ♖c8-a8 and then ♖a7, ♗b7, freeing the bishop. Then I started calculating all the knight jumps, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I didn't see a way for him to win at least a pawn back. So in the end I just trusted my calculation rather than a sense of danger and took the damned pawn.

27...a5 wasn't an easy solution for Black either: 28.♖c5 ♖b8 29.♖xb5 ♘d5 30.♗c6 ♖xb5 31.♗xb5, and

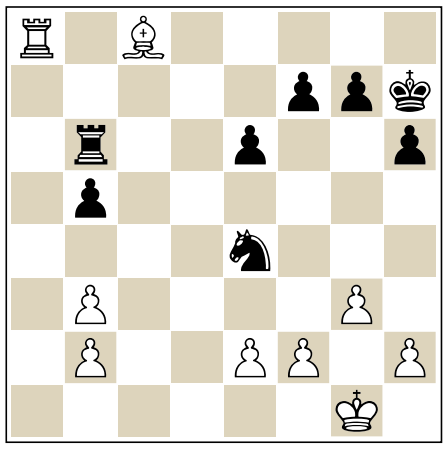
I don't see an easy way for Black to make a draw. I even doubt whether he can save this endgame at all.

28.♗xa6! ♖b6 29.♖c8+!

29.♗c8 was my first idea, but here I found a draw for Black: 29...♔f8 30.♖c7 ♖d6! 31.♖c2 ♖b6! 32.♖c7 ♖d6 33.♖c5 ♖b6!, and White has to repeat, because the king is coming.

29...♔h7 30.♖a8! ♘e4 31.♗c8!

Another only move. Now that I have put all my pieces on squares where black pieces belong (the rook on a8, the bishop on c8) I am ready to execute my plan, which is ♖a7-c7 and bishop to b7 or d7.



31...g6

Jon Ludvig spent a lot of time here trying to find a way to use the fact that my bishop is absent, but he failed to find it. So did I and the computer.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

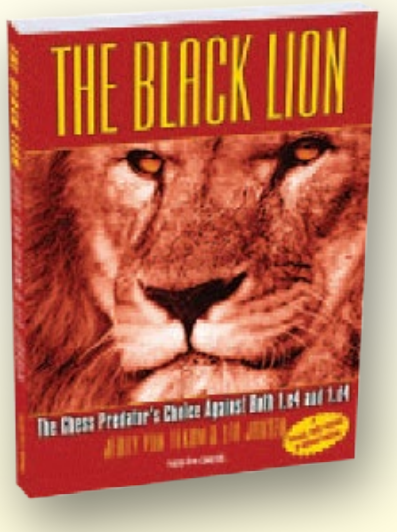
In the final round Jon Ludvig Hammer also had to bow to the Dutch invader.

31...♖d6 was logical, and here Hammer and I had different ideas for White, but apparently both of them give White an advantage: 32.♗b7!? ♘c5 33.♗f3 ♘xb3 34.♖b8 ♖d2 35.e3! ♖xb2 36.♖xb5, and because of the pin Black will lose material.

32.♖a7! was Hammer's simple and strong solution. The bishop will get out and Black is powerless.

32.♖a7 ♔g7 33.♖c7 ♔f8 34.♗d7

Here it became obvious that I am just a pawn up. Moreover, the b5 pawn is weak and my pieces are better. Hammer was running



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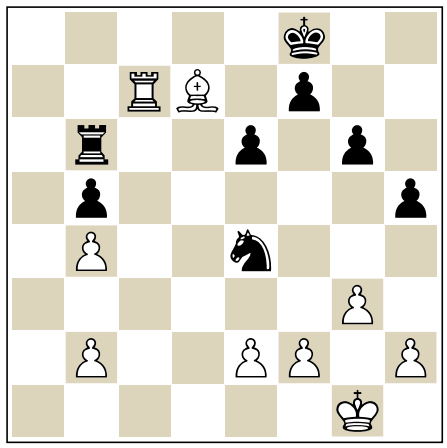
short of time and I could clearly see that he was very upset about his position. He started playing quickly and impulsively.

34...h5 35.b4



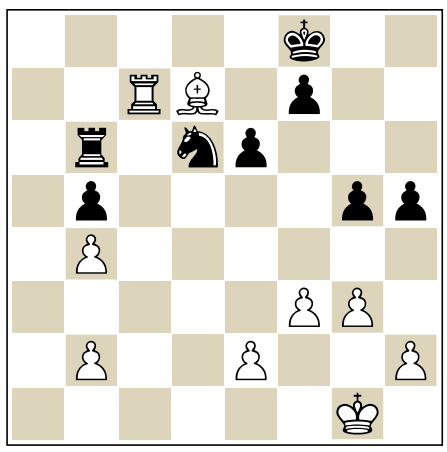
35...g5

He could have stayed solid, but I don't know if that would have been better: 35...♘d6 36.♖c5 (36.♔g2!?) 36...♔e7 37.♗c6 ♖a6 38.♗xb5 ♖b6 39.♗a4 ♖xb4 40.b3 h4 41.f3, and White obviously has a large advantage due to the extra pawn, and should win in the long run.

36.f3

I initially intended to play 36.h4 to fix his h5 pawn, but then I realized that I would only create a weakness for myself on h4. So instead I decided to just make some useful moves.

36...♘d6



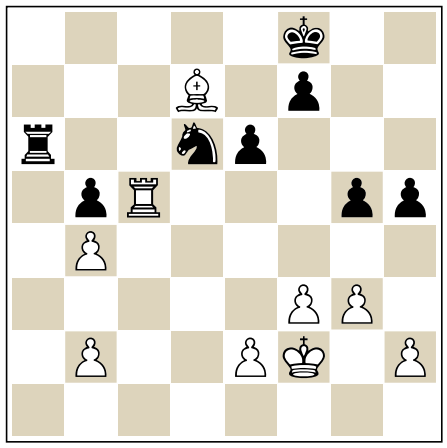
37.♔f2?!

My original plan was to exchange rooks here. I had the illusion that because he has two weaknesses, one on b5 and one on h5, I would be able to win the endgame. In reality he has an easy fortress: the knight on d6, pawns to e5 and f6, and the king to h6 if needed. So I should probably have gone 37.♖c5 immediately here, not allowing ...♖a6-a4. Objectively, though, the move is not bad, and I still had a close to winning position.

So 37.♖c5!? was more technical, not allowing any counterplay. A possible line is 37...♔e7 38.♗c6 h4! 39.gxh4 gxh4 40.b3 f5 41.♔g2 ♖a6 42.♗xb5 ♖b6 43.♗d3 ♖xb4 44.♗c2, and White should be winning, although Black is fighting.

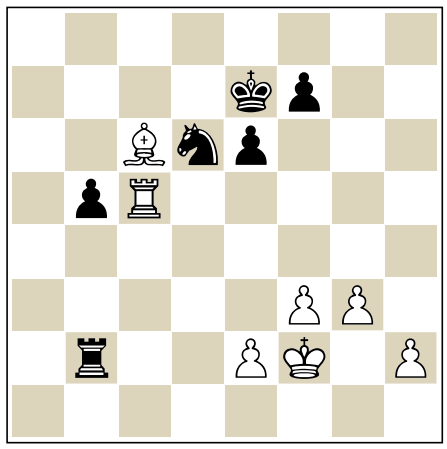
37...♖a6! 38.♖c5

As said, 38.♖c6 would be a draw.



38...♖a2?

The real chance was 38...♖a4!. I would actually be happy with my position then, and I was planning to take on b5 and consolidate. In fact, Black has very good chances to survive here thanks to his counterplay with ...e5-e4. But I could have taken on g5, winning another pawn, and even though this would have given him a passed pawn, my winning chances would have been better than his drawing chances: 39.♖xg5! (if 39.♗xb5 then 39...♖xb4 40.♗d3 f5! 41.♖c2 ♔e7, pushing e5-e4 as promised) 39...♖xb4 40.♖xh5 ♖xb2 41.♗c6! (41.♖c5 ♖a2!) 41...♔e7 (41...b4 42.♖h8+ ♔e7 43.♖b8, and the b-pawn isn't really going anywhere) 42.♖c5!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Now the main idea is to push the h- and g-pawns and meet ...b4 with ♗b5!-d3. I believe White may just be winning here. However, I doubt whether I would have been confident and fearless enough in time-trouble not to grab the b-pawn but the g-pawn.

39.♗xb5

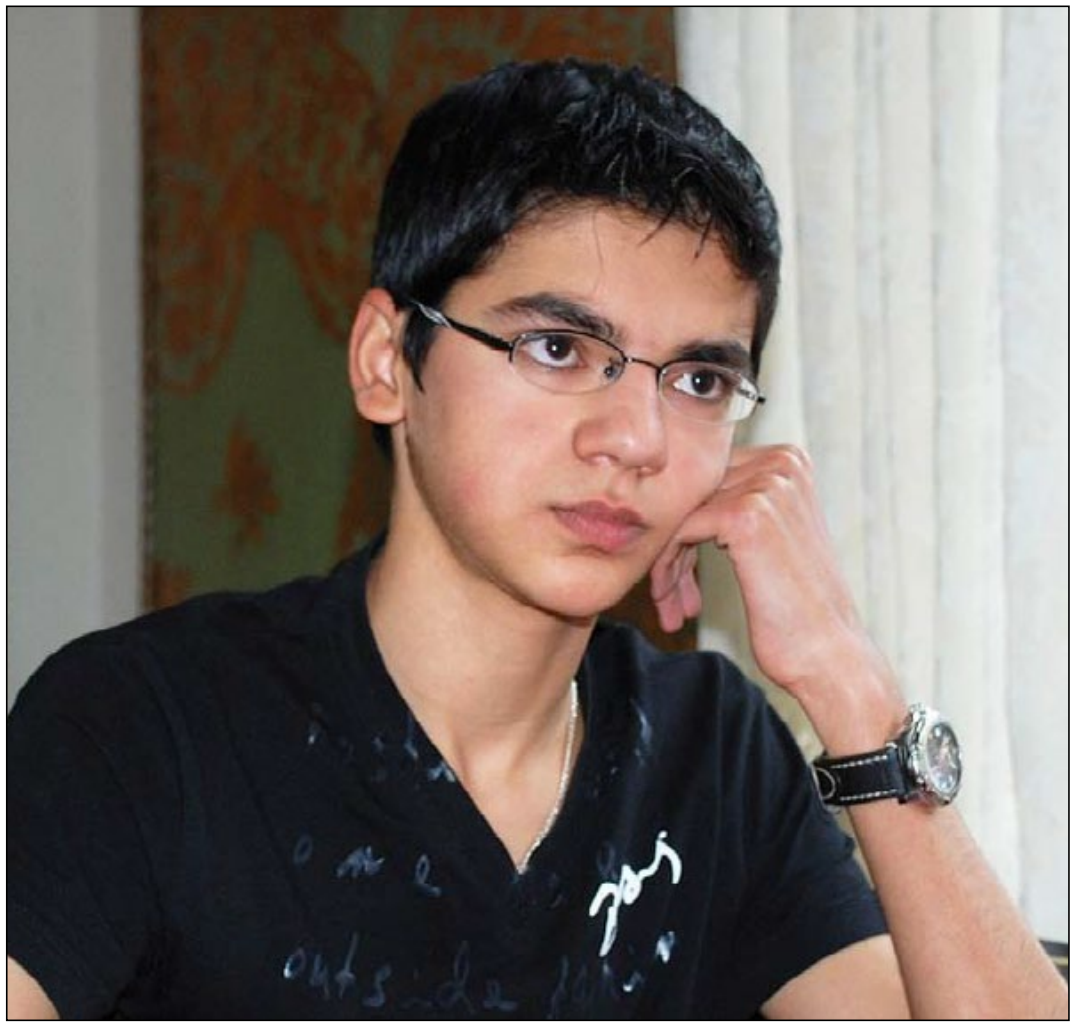
After 39.♖xg5! I would have got the position I had been aiming for, and the game would have been be over at once. However, I saw some ghosts and decided to take on b5 first. Anyway, it didn't really matter. After 39.♖xg5! ♖xb2 40.♗xb5 ♖xb4 41.♗d3 h4 42.g4! is winning.

39...h4

39...♘xb5 40.♖xb5 f6 seems to offer chances, but White wins easily with 41.♖b7! ♖xb2 42.b5, and with such a king Black is hopeless.

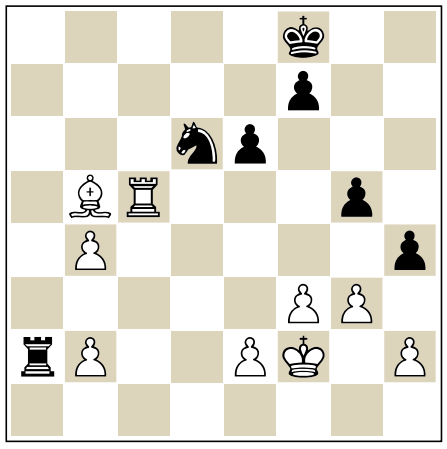
Malmö 2010 — **cat.XIII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2642	*	1	1	½	1	1	4½	2920
2	Jon Ludvig Hammer	IGM	NOR	2610	0	*	½	1	1	1	3½	2710
3	Nils Grandelius	IM	SWE	2476	0	½	*	1	½	½	2½	2587
4	Jonny Hector	IGM	SWE	2609	½	0	0	*	1	1	2½	2561
5	Tiger Hillarp Persson	IGM	SWE	2542	0	0	½	0	*	1	1½	2425
6	Pia Cramling	IGM	SWE	2536	0	0	½	0	0	*	½	2209



CALLE ERLANDSSON

What's next for Anish Giri? In the past 12 months the Dutch junior has won an amazing 154 Elo points. Will he soon cross the 2700 barrier?



40.b3!

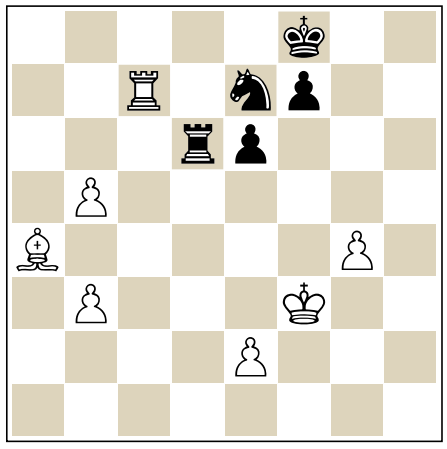
A pawn is a pawn!

40...hxg3+ 41.hxg3 g4 42.♗a4!

A nice square for the bishop. After this I started to get a bit nervous, spending a lot of time, without real reasons...

42...gxf3 43.♔xf3 ♖d2 44.♖c7 ♘f5 45.b5 ♖d6 46.g4 ♘e7

I knew I was totally winning, but I was so disgusted with myself, thinking for a long time and hesitating so much, that I decided to make one move instantly just to change the rhythm and not to end up in time-trouble.



47.♖c2!

This move makes no sense, but I liked it and at least I played it quickly.

47...♖b6 48.♔e4 ♔e8 49.♔d4 ♖b8 50.♔e5

I didn't really know where to go with my king, so I decided just to go here and there...

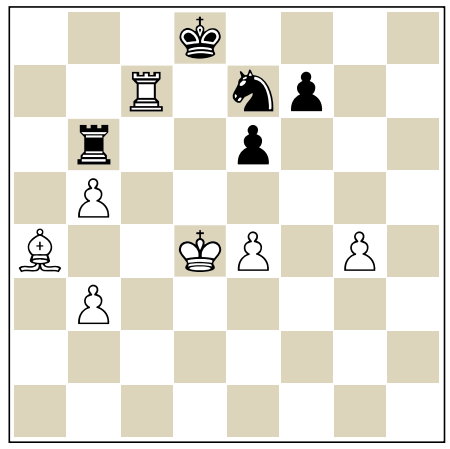
50...♘d5 51.e4! ♘e7

51...♘e3 is obviously losing: 52.b6+ ♔f8 53.♖c6, and the b-pawn will queen with the help of the king.

52.♖c7 ♖b6 53.♔d4

As I already said, I was a bit hesitant about where to go. In reality, those king manoeuvres were pretty clever...

53...♔d8



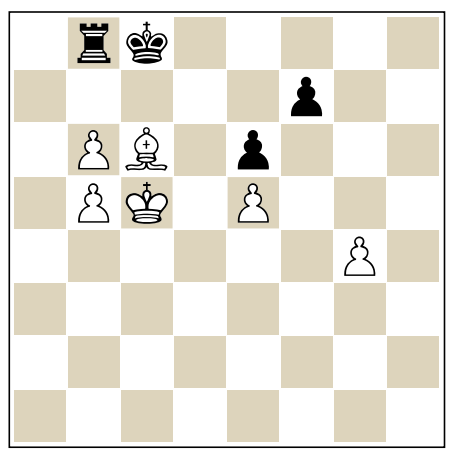
54.♖xe7!

I always like to win by force. However, 54.♖a7 would be just as winning.

54...♔xe7 55.♔c5 ♖b8 56.b6

Now Black can't do anything. Eventually there will be some zugzwang.

56...♔d8 57.e5 ♖c8+ 58.♗c6 ♖b8 59.b4 ♔c8 60.b5



Black resigned. A nice game to finish the tournament with. I was pretty proud of this one.

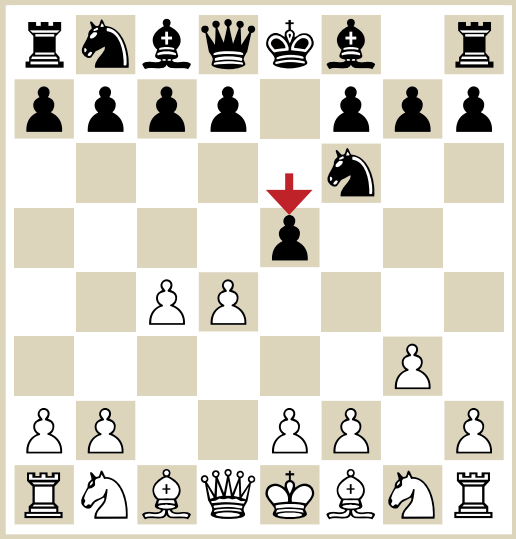
Thanks to this win I finished the tournament with 4½/5 and sole victory, repeating exactly what Nigel Short had pulled off last year. Looking back I was pretty happy with the tournament. I played some nice games and I got a good score, although obviously I had some luck in the first two games. But then, who can win a tournament without luck?

Budapest Gambit Delayed

Jeroen Bosch

Secrets of Opening Surprises

3...e5!?



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 e5

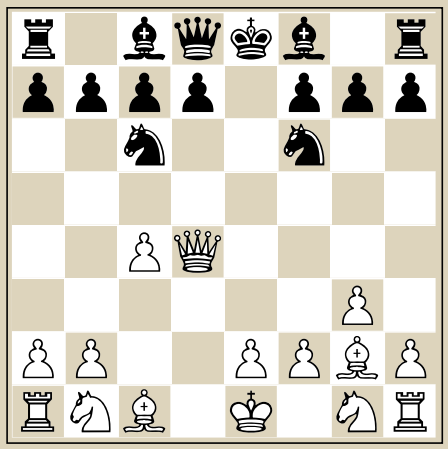
A real surprise! Pawns can't move backwards so a certain amount of caution is always required. However, that does not explain Black's slow-motion e-pawn which goes from e6 to e5. In fact, Black argues that in the Budapest Gambit an additional tempo (3.g3) is detrimental to White's position. There are two arguments in favour of this line of reasoning. Firstly, White's main line against the Budapest proper (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4) is 4.♗f4; with a pawn on g3 the bishop feels less comfortable on f4, though. Secondly, White often plays e3 in the Budapest Gambit, which does not combine very well with 3.g3. Naturally, Black has to watch out for those positions where g3 comes in handy, and these do occur in the Budapest.

The witty 3...e5 was first played by the multiple Hungarian Champion Gedeon Barcza (against Pal Benko in 1948). A young Lajos Portisch has also played it (unsuccessfully), but 3...e5 has mainly been tried by the Brazilian IM Herman van Riemsdijk. On the whole, you won't find many games with this Delayed Budapest Gambit. Disregarding the objective merits of the tempo loss for a moment, this may also be explained by the fact that Budapest players will embark on their favourite gambit on the second move, and those who don't play the gambit will certainly not consider it a tempo down. Yet, I feel that this gambit against the Catalan has been underestimated, and I intend to show you why.

4.dxe5

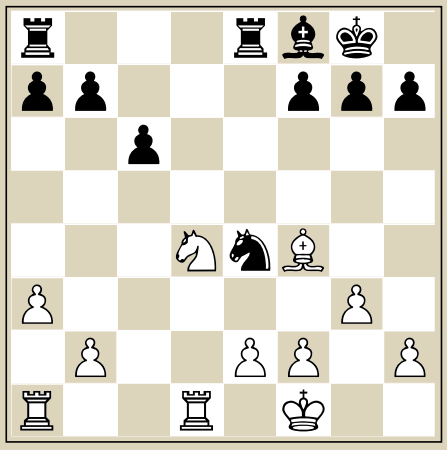
As they say, the only way to refute a gambit is by accepting it. Of course White could argue that with the additional 3.g3 it makes sense to investigate positions that could also result from the English Opening:

■ 4.♗g2 exd4 5.♕xd4 ♘c6



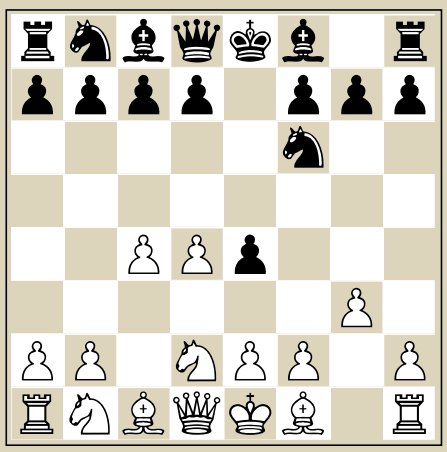
This attack on the queen proves White wrong. It is impossible to believe in a white opening advantage after Black regains the time lost in the opening (2...e6 and 3...e5) with this natural developing move. 6.♕d1 (6.♕d2 ♗c5 7.

♘c3 d6 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.e3 ♗e6 11.b3 ♕d7 was fine for Black in Cobo-Van Riemsdijk, Tucuman 1971) 6...♗b4+ (6...♘e5!? 7.♘d2 ♗b4 8.♕b3 ♕e7 9.a3 ♗c5 10.♘h3 a5 11.♘f4 a4 12.♕c3 d6, Neelotpal-Sharbaf, Mashhad 2010, and having cramped White's queenside, Black is doing very OK) 7.♘d2 d5!? (7...0-0) 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♘f3 0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.♘b3 ♘f6 12.a3 ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 ♗f8 14.♔f1 ♗f5 15.♘fd4 ♘xd4 16.♘xd4 ♗e4 17.♗xe4 ♘xe4 18.♗f4 c6



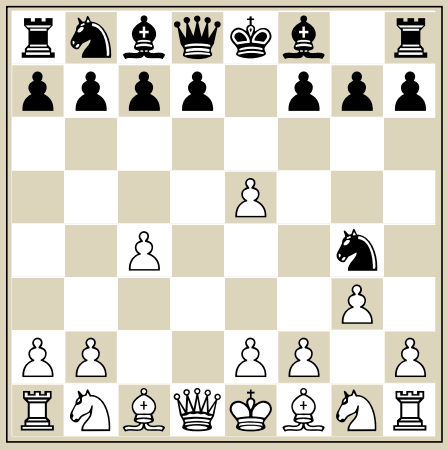
with equal chances in the stem game Benko-Barcza, Budapest 1948.

■ 4.♘f3 e4 (4...exd4 5.♘xd4 – if Black now continues quietly, he might well end up in an English Opening a (useful) tempo down. So he went: 5...d5 6.♗g2! ♗b4+ – 6...dxc4 is a better attempt, but I would prefer White – 7.♘c3 0-0 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♕b3!, and White had an edge after 9...♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♘b6 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.0-0, Pachman-Brat, Prague 1954. As an afterthought, 4...♗b4+!? is interesting) 5.♘fd2.



Now 5...c6 6.♗g2 d5 7.0-0 ♗d6?! (7...♗e7 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.f3 ♘c6 is about equal) 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.f3 0-0? 10.fxe4 ♘g4 11.♕b3 ♘c6 12.e3 ♘xh2? 13.♔xh2 ♕h4+ 14.♔g1 ♕xg3 was easily refuted by 15.e5+–, Molnar-L.Portisch, Budapest 1956. Black can just improve with 7...♗e7, but he can also play 5...d5 6.cxd5 (or 6.♗g2 ♘c6!?, while 6...c6 transposes to Molnar-Portisch) 6...♕xd5 7.e3 ♗b4 8.♘c3 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 0-0, with interesting play.

4...♘g4

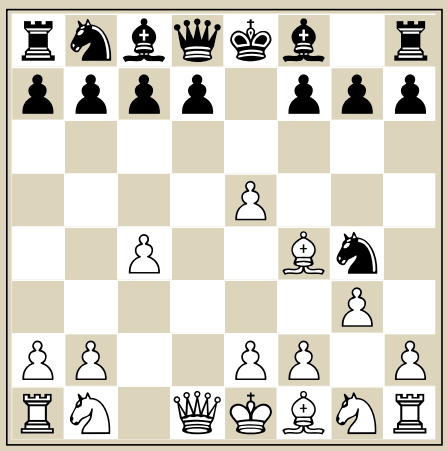


Here we are in the Budapest Gambit with the addition of g2-g3.

It makes sense to make 5.♘f3 the main line of our investigation. Together with 4.♗f4, 4.♘f3 is, after all, the main line against the 'regular' Budapest Gambit.

5.♘f3

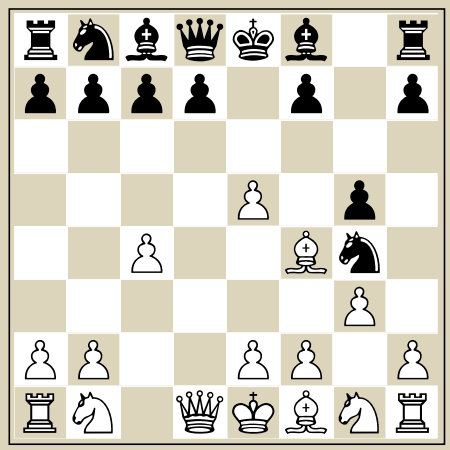
■ Nobody has ever dared **5.♗f4**, convinced as they are that the combination of a bishop on f4 and a pawn on g3 is unhealthy. Yet, things are not that clear.



Now, I don't like 5...♗b4+ because of 6.♘c3 (not 6.♘d2 g5), when the additional g3 favours White.

– After 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 Black may consider 6...♗c5!? (in the main line of the Budapest Gambit Black gives a check with the bishop, but here after 6...♗b4+ 7.♘c3! – 7.♘bd2 ♕e7 8.♗g2 ♘gxe5 9.0-0± – 7...♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♕e7 9.♕d5 the extra tempo is very useful and renders this line almost unplayable for Black) 7.e3 f6!? 8.exf6 ♕xf6 9.♘c3 ♗b4 and the bishop on f4 is slightly awkward, but there is nothing concrete for Black.

– 5...g5!?



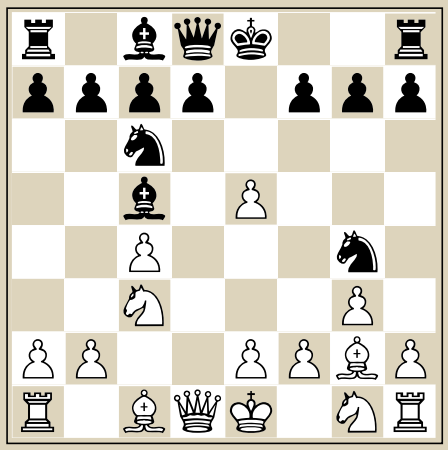
This is less odd than it looks. In the Budapest Gambit after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4 they also play 4...g5 (Mamedyarov and a young Topalov have done so). Then White's best answer is 5.♗g3, when he can obtain an edge with a fairly quick h4. Now he is forced to be more modest: 6.♗d2 ♘xe5 (6...♗g7) 7.♘f3 (7.♗c3 ♘bc6 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗g2 0-0 is a normal continuation. White has a slight edge) 7...♗g7 (7...♘xf3+ 8.exf3 ♕e7+ 9.♗e2±) 8.♘xe5 (8.♘xg5?! ♘xc4) 8...♗xe5 9.♗c3 ♘c6 (not 9...♕f6 10.♗xe5 ♕xe5 11.♘c3 d6, with a positional edge for White) 10.♗g2, with a slight advantage but nothing special.

■ Dubious is **5.f4?!** ♗c5 6.♘h3 d6, and Black has ample compensation.

■ **5.e6** cannot unduly worry Black, although it is more tricky

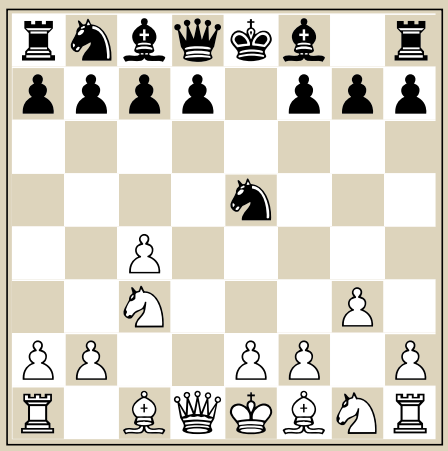
here than in the Budapest proper: 5...♗b4+ (the exciting way to play it; 5...fxe6 6.e4 ♘e5 is also playable; worse is 5...dxe6 6.♕xd8+ ♔xd8, which equalizes in the regular Budapest Gambit, as with the pawn on g3 White can put some pressure on Black's queenside with ♗g2) 6.♗d2 ♕f6 7.exf7+ ♔xf7 8.♘f3 ♕xb2 9.♗xb4 ♕xb4+ 10.♘bd2 ♖e8 or 10...♖f8.

■ The book refutation of our SOS line is **5.♘c3**, which is based on a game Tukmakov-Van Riemsdijk, Groningen 1990, where White gained an edge after 5...♘c6?! 6.♗g2 ♗c5?! (6...♘gxe5)



7.♘h3! (this is the point – White can harmoniously develop all his pieces without having to play e3) 7...♘cxe5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.b3 d6 11.♘f4 ♘f6 12.♘c3 c6 13.♕c2.

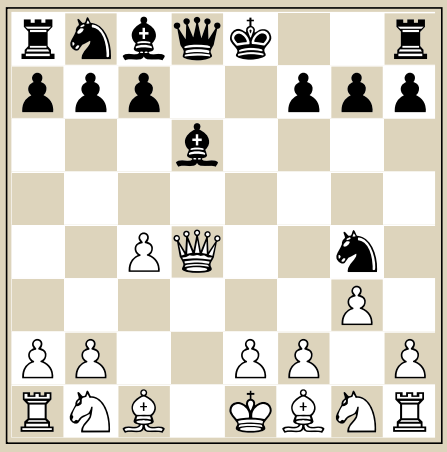
However, Black's fifth move is the culprit, and after 5...♘xe5! Black is doing well.



The pawn sacrifice 6.♘f3 ♘xc4 7.♕d5 is not very convincing, when Black returns the material with 7...♘b6 (7...♘d6) 8.♕e5+ ♕e7 9.♕xc7 ♘a6 10.♕f4 ♘b4, with active piece play. And 6.b3 can be favourably met by 6...♗b4! 7.♗b2 (7.♗d2 0-0 8.♗g2 ♖e8) 7...0-0 or even 7...♕f6!?.

■ Somewhat similar to Tukmakov-Van Riemsdijk is **5.♗g2** ♗c5?! 6.♘h3 ♘xe5 7.0-0 d6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.b3 a6 10.♘f4±, J.Horvath-G.Horvath, Zalaegerszeg 1991. However, here too, Black has 5...♘xe5!.

■ **5.♕d4** was given an exclam by Eric Schiller, but Black has 5...d6, which is a promising gambit (incidentally **5.♕d5** can also be met by 5...d6). 6.exd6 ♗xd6! (6...♘c6? 7.♕e4+ ♗e6 8.dxc7 ♕d1+ – 8...♕xc7 – 9.♔xd1 ♘xf2+ 10.♔e1 ♘xe4 11.♗g2 f5 was not entirely clear in Malo-Arpa, Aragon 1998, but White should have a slight edge)



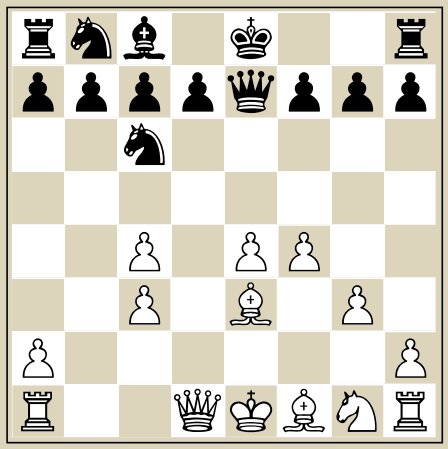
– 7.♘f3 0-0 8.♗g2 ♘c6 9.♕d2 (9.♕d1? ♗c5!∓) 9...♗e6, and Black has more than enough for the pawn.

– Not 7.♕xg7? ♗e5, and wins.

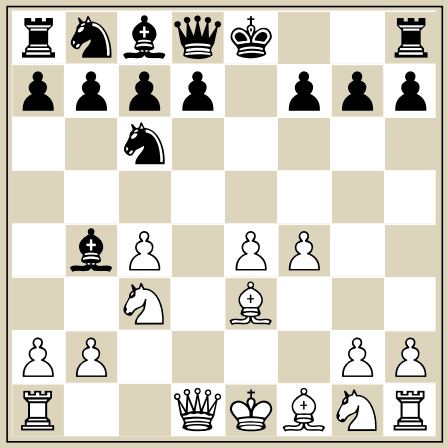
– 7.c5? was given an ! by Schiller, but 7...♘c6 favours Black.

– 7.♕e4+ ♗e6 (7...♗e7) 8.♘c3 (8.♕xb7 ♘d7; 8.♗h3 ♘d7 9.♗xg4 ♘f6 10.♕xb7 ♘xg4) 8...♘c6, with compensation.

■ **5.e4** is a serious move – in the Budapest Gambit 4.e4 is often associated with Alekhine. After 5...♘xe5 6.f4 Black should play 6...♘ec6 7.♗e3 (7.♗g2 ♗c5 8.♘e2 d6 9.♘bc3 0-0 10.♘a4 ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 a5 is about equal, Hanks-Perez, Tel Aviv ol 1964. On move 7 Black can also play 7...♗b4+) 7...♗b4+ 8.♘c3 (8.♔f2 ♕e7 9.♗g2 ♗c5 10.♕d2 ♗xe3+ 11.♕xe3 ♘b4 was Quinteros-Van Riemsdijk, Sao Paulo 1978. Black is doing fine in this complicated position) 8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕e7



Play has transposed directly into the Budapest Gambit, a line which is known to favour Black. You will find several games in your database (two by Keres as White) following 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.e4 ♘xe5 5.f4 ♘ec6 6.♗e3 ♗b4+ 7.♘c3



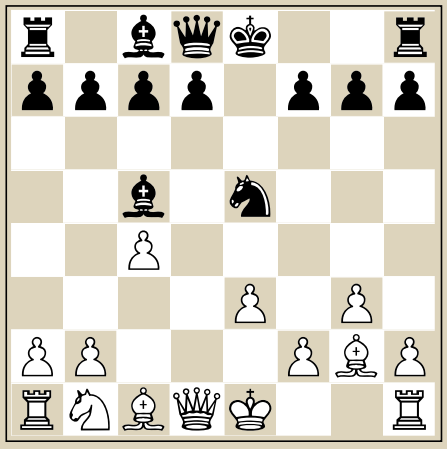
7...♕h4+! (so Black actually provokes g3!) 8.g3 ♗xc3+! 9.bxc3 ♕e7. Viktor Moskalenko explains the ins and outs in his *The Fabulous Budapest Gambit* (New In Chess, 2008).

5...♗c5

Black develops just like he does in the Budapest Gambit and provokes e3. Here the combination of e3 and g3 will lead to Budapest positions in which White can develop his bishop to the long diagonal (not bad), but Black may profit from the weakened light squares.

The subsequent moves are pretty much forced.

6.e3 ♘c6 7.♗g2 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5



Black has retrieved his gambit pawn with a perfectly normal position. Just imagine: you could also have been defending some slightly worse Catalan around this stage!

9.0-0

9.♘c3 0-0 10.0-0 d6 11.b3 a5 (11...♗g4! is OK for Black) 12.h3 ♕f6?! 13.♘d5! ♕d8 (Black had probably overlooked 13...♘f3+ 14.♕xf3 ♕xa1 15.♕e2!, and White more or less wins) 14.♗b2 c6 15.♘c3 ♕e7 16.♘e4, with a slight edge for White in Quinteros-Tempone, Mar del Plata 1995.

9...d6

Or the immediate 9...0-0.

10.b3

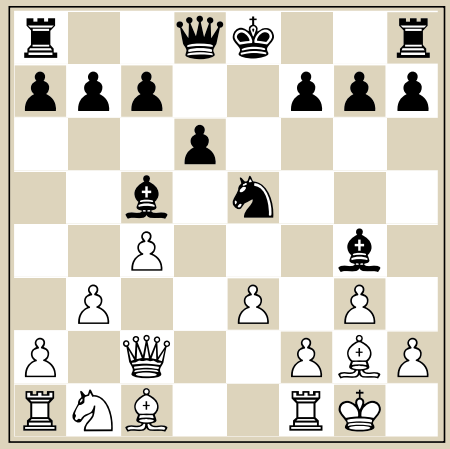
10.b4 looks frightening, and is an argument in favour of 9...0-0. Yet, after 10...♗b6 11.c5 dxc5 12.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 13.♗b2 (13.♖d1+ ♔e7 14.♖d5 f6 15.bxc5 ♗a5) 13...f6 14.bxc5 ♗xc5 White has a certain amount of compensation for the pawn, but nothing special.

10.♕c2 0-0 11.b3 ♕f6 (11...c6) 12.♗b2 ♕h6!? (12...♗f5) 13.♗xe5 (or 13.♘c3 ♗h3 14.♘d5 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 c6) 13...dxe5 14.♘c3 f5 15.♖ad1 c6, with a favourable Dutch in Terasti-Laihonen, Tampere 1997.

10...♗g4

Gaining time and taking advantage of the weakened light squares. Alternatively, there is 10...0-0.

11.♕c2



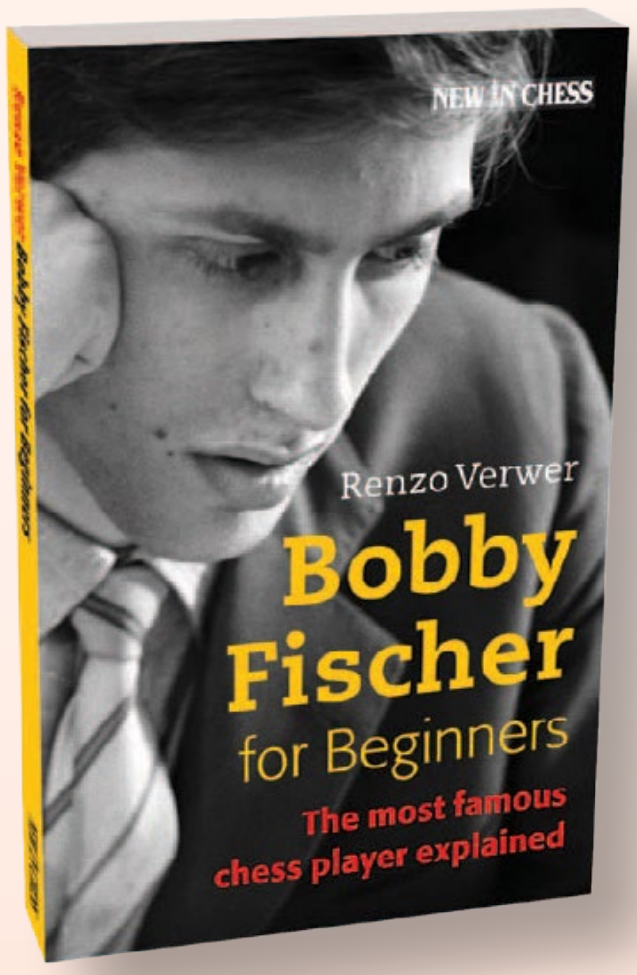
11...♘f3+!? Black is also doing well after 11...♗f3.

12.♔h1 0-0 13.♘d2

Admitting that Black is fully equal. White suffers slightly after 13.♗b2 ♕g5! 14.♘d2 ♕h5. Note that 13.h3?! is well-met by 13...♕f6!.

13...♘xd2

Draw. Küttner-Frenzel, Ruhla 1957.



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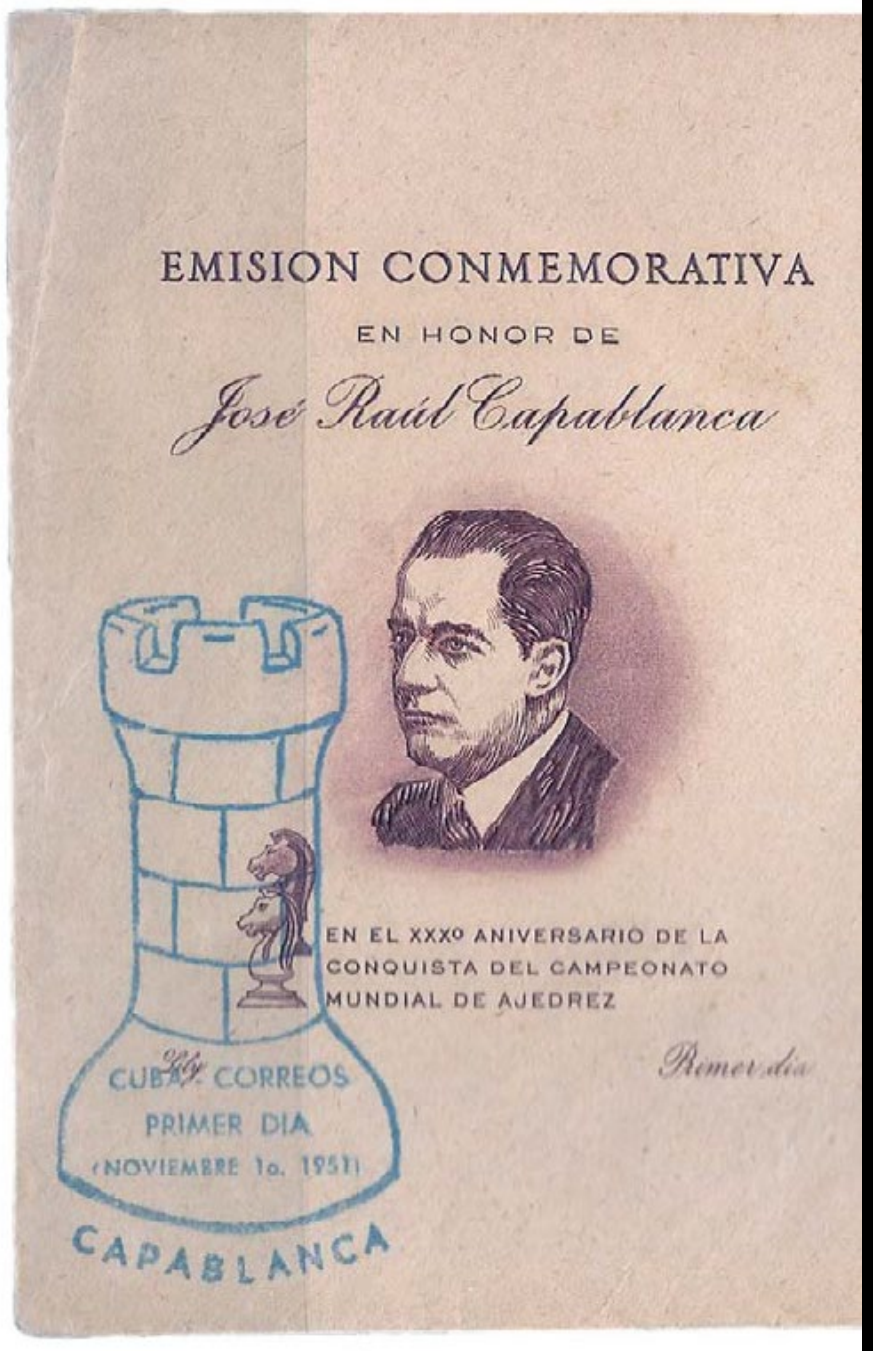
A lover of chess history, **Nigel Short** had always wished to play in the Capablanca Memorial in Havana, perhaps the most venerable traditional tournament in Latin-America. When the Englishman finally made it to the Cuban capital for the 45th edition of the annual tribute to the third World Champion, everyday reality in the Caribbean socialist paradise sadly differed from what he had hoped to find.



(Not) Havana Good Time

Let us begin by breaking a taboo and stating clearly that the Cubans don't really have any money. I apologise for mentioning so vulgar a detail in the opening paragraph but it is an important point and one that has been omitted, deliberately methinks, in previous glowing New In Chess reports on the Capablanca Memorial. My shared third prize in a category 19 tournament meant that I went home only slightly poorer than I arrived. Frankly speaking, no self-respecting chess professional should ever go there. Obviously I don't respect myself. Financially things have changed somewhat detrimentally since Wilhelm Steinitz, in the *International Chess Magazine*, enthusiastically referred to Cuba as 'the El Dorado of Chess'.

For a poor place, I was amazed to find how expensive it was, and that is not only because of the Fidel Castro 20% robber tax imposed on changing US$ (euros are somewhat better). Internet was considered a great luxury and could be obtained by visiting the lobby of the adjoining hotel at a price of nigh-on 6 euros an hour. I suppose that could be considered to be a great improvement on the Olympiad of 1966 when, as Ray Keene mentioned, it took a week to place an international call. The general attitude that foreigners are there to be shafted permeates the society, whether it be from opportunistic taxi-drivers (a global problem admittedly) or supermarket check-out assistants who dutifully swipe through your purchases electronically but then manually type in a fictitious total (a new experience for me). Old-fashioned pick-pocketing is another hazard, as one unfortunate player learned to his cost, having

Over the years Cuba has paid tribute to their greatest chess son in many ways. In 1957 they issued stamps celebrating the 30th anniversary of Capablanca's win in the World Championship match against Lasker.

his mobile phone lifted, whilst dancing in a night-club.

Nor is there is anything remotely 'libre' about Cuba, as I discovered when my female interpreter was most rudely harassed by three police on just my second day in the country. She was black and therefore, in the eyes of the local constabulary, obviously a prostitute. Likewise, make the mistake of chatting to a female chess player in the lobby of the Habana Riviera whilst waiting for the pathetically slow lifts, and there was a fair chance she would be aggressively questioned by security, under exactly the same suspicion. Of course, if the authorities cared for private enterprise – which being communist they obviously don't – they would do their utmost to encourage this flourishing service industry, rather than futilely attempting to stamp it out. That prostitution exists in abundance in Cuba became obvious on my very first walk outside the hotel. I had not gone 10 metres before being addressed by an attractive, scantily-clad young lady offering to give me a good time which, naturally, I politely declined. Even had I wanted to accept, there would have been no chance of getting her up to my room without bribing merrily away. For sex tourism there are far better places to go, or so a friend of mine who knows about these things assures me...

Of course, by no means all things were bad in Havana, and I am not just referring to the pleasures of the wonderful music, drinking mojitos and buying Cohiba cigars (I don't smoke, but what the hell). On the positive side, Cuba is one of the few places on the planet where a deep chess culture still exists. Far from being pariahs of society (as we are in some places), grandmasters are respected – even revered. Walking through the UNESCO Heritage Site of old Havana, or by the sea, ordinary people would warmly call out my name and wish me luck for the tournament.

Given this genuine love for chess, it was surprising that the tournament wasn't better organised. The main problem, for the first couple of days at least, was the intolerable heat which would have made being in a sauna, wearing an overcoat and ski-boots, a preferable option. On the second day I made my silent protest by appearing scruffily in T-shirt and shorts (discretely ignored by Cuban TV) after which they took the hint and introduced fans. Why this couldn't have been done at the start, I have no idea. I have also no idea why there were no demonstration boards in the playing hall or why the spectators were roped off so far away that following the games was an act of faith. And, if you want people to return to your country (as they sincerely do) is it necessary to cause considerable anxiety by leaving the reimbursement of expensive airfares until less than an hour before departure?

Quibbles aside: the tournament was utterly dominated, for the fourth time in four outings, by Vasily Ivanchuk, who apparently feels totally relaxed and at ease in this Caribbean socialist paradise. I put it to him over lunch one day that he does well because the country reminds him of the Soviet Union (except with warmer weather). 'Yes, maybe', he smiled.

He began well by beating me with black.

QP 8.6 – A40
Nigel Short
Vasily Ivanchuk
Havana 2010 (1)

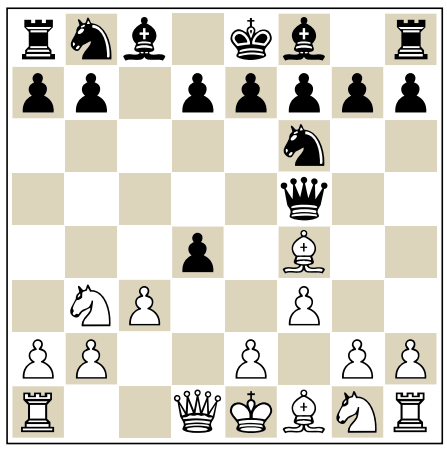
1.d4

Players of my advanced age should be forbidden from playing 1.e4 on health grounds...

1...♘f6 2.♗g5

I gave this English speciality a punt after finding a paucity of Ivanchuk games in the Trompowsky.

2...♘e4 3.♗f4 c5 4.f3 ♕a5+ 5.c3 ♘f6 6.♘d2 cxd4 7.♘b3 ♕f5

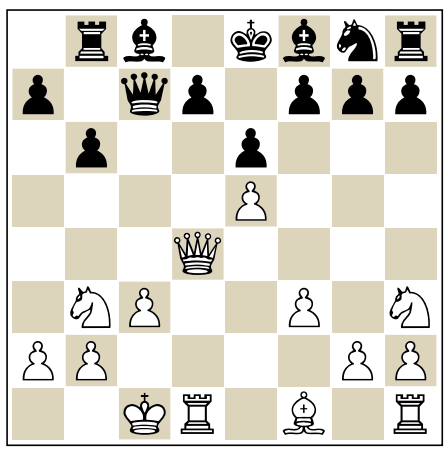


A risky line, but with a good pedigree.

8.♗xb8 ♖xb8 9.♕xd4 b6 10.e4 ♕f4 11.♘h3 ♕c7 12.e5 ♘g8

I know Svidler and Vachier-Lagrave have played this previously, but doesn't it go against some basic principles like, er, developing pieces? In my day such things were considered important.

13.0-0-0 e6



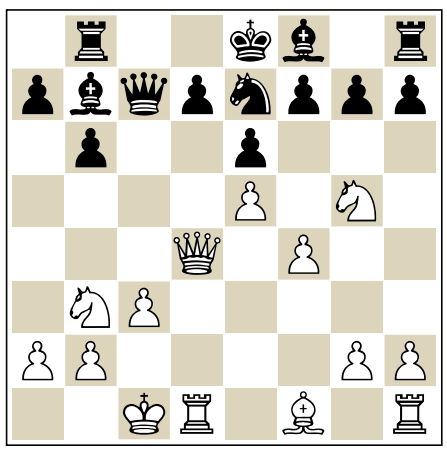
14.f4?!

I played this lousy pawn push for two very poor reasons: a) I was disconcerted by the speed and apparent calm of my opponent's play; b) I had been played previously, as a consequence of which I had superficially examined it prior to the game. On the other hand it is very unnatural and shows that, just ten minutes into the first round, in unfamiliar surroundings and the sweltering heat, my brain was not yet attuned to the hurly-burly of high-level competitive chess.

Correct was the obvious 14.♗d3 ♘e7 15.♖he1 (completing development) 15...♘c6 16.♕e3, after which I feel sure that, bishop or no bishop, White has the better position. The h3 knight retains the option to enter the fray via f4 (although g5 is still more likely). The small tactical point is that 16...♘b4 is well met by 17.♗e4!.

14...♘e7 15.♘g5 ♗b7

I am ashamed to say that this extremely obvious move, which I would have played myself even at blitz, had escaped my pre-game analytical radar. The main drawback of 14.f4?! is highlighted – the weakness on the long diagonal.



16.♗d3?!

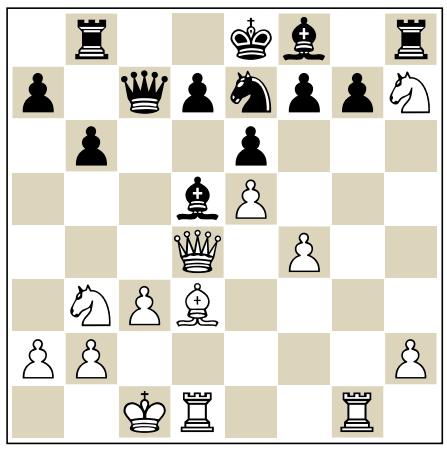
White should attempt to throw a spanner in the works by 16.♗b5, as in Efimov-Miezis, Castellaneta 1999, which was eventually won by White. The text is too accommodating.

16...♗xg2!

I must say I was surprised by this bold course of action, but the open g-file is of little consequence.

17.♖hg1 ♗d5 18.♘xh7

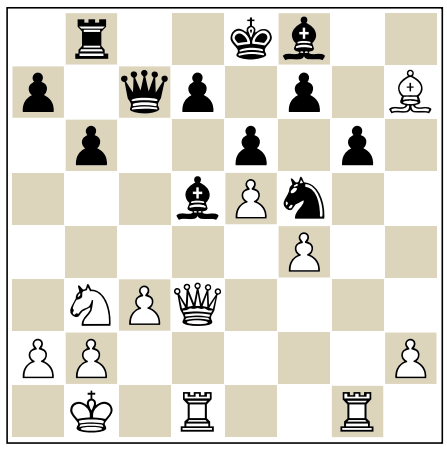
I wasn't happy about the prospect of getting one of my pieces caught offside, but I hadn't seen a refutation and, besides, I wasn't sure what else to do.



18...♖xh7!?

By no means bad, but I was actually more concerned about 18...♘c6 19.♕e3 ♘b4 (the direct 19...♗xb3 20.axb3 ♗c5 21.♕g3 ♗xg1 22.♖xg1 leads to a vicious and decisive attack). But apparently White can get away with the calm 20.♔b1 ♘xd3 21.♕xd3.

19.♗xh7 g6 20.♔b1 ♘f5 21.♕d3

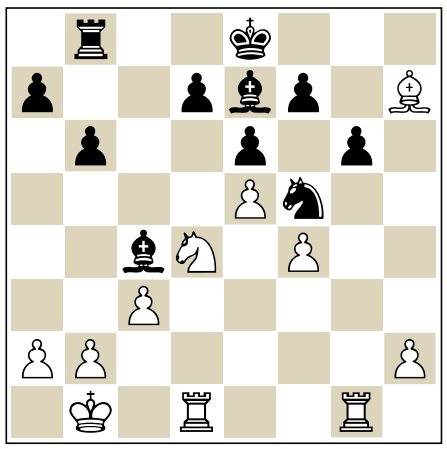


21...♕c4!

When you are material down, exchange pieces! In this case Black needs to reduce my firepower to properly ensnare the errant bishop.

22.♕xc4 ♗xc4 23.♘d4 ♗e7!

23...♘xd4 24.♖xd4 ♗c5 25.♖xg6! is a nice trick that leaves White on top.

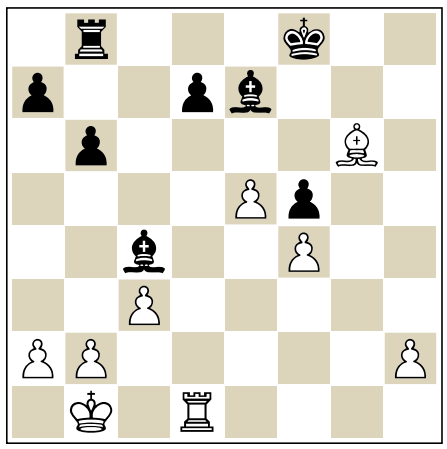


24.♖xg6?

In spite of, or perhaps because of, a long think I was unable to find the right continuation.

24.♘xf5 exf5 25.♗xg6! is right – as both Nepomniachtchi and Ivanchuk suggested later – with a very murky outcome. In fact it is by no means inconceivable that White stands better. I rejected it, not for any specific reason, but because I was generally afraid that if he were to co-ordinate his bishops, that I might slowly get ground down. (Incidentally Rybka suggests 25.♖g3 ♖c8 26.♖h3, which shows silicon monsters still have something to learn. After a continuation like 26...♗e6 27.b3 ♔d8 28.♔c2 ♔c7, with the idea of ...d6 and/or ...♖h8, there is only one potential winner, and it isn't White. It is a typical example of a position where computers fail to grasp long-term problems.)

24...fxg6 25.♗xg6+ ♔f8 26.♘xf5 exf5



27.♗xf5?!

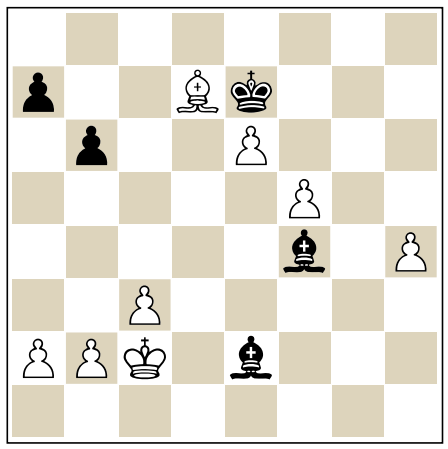
Probably the best chance lay in 27.♖xd7 ♗e6 (27...♖d8 leads to a worse version of the game) 28.♖xa7 ♖d8 29.♔c2 ♗c5 30.♖h7!, after which White may be able to survive although he still faces an uphill struggle, e.g. 30...♗e3 31.♖h8+ ♗g8 32.♗xf5 ♔e7 33.♖h4 ♖d2+ 34.♔b1 ♖f2.

27...♖d8!

Played instantly. In my calculations I had simply failed to appreciate that White could be in such danger with no less than four pawns for the bishop and with such limited material remaining. I understood it now but, alas, there was no way back.

Instead, 27...♗e6 28.♗g6! gives good counterplay.

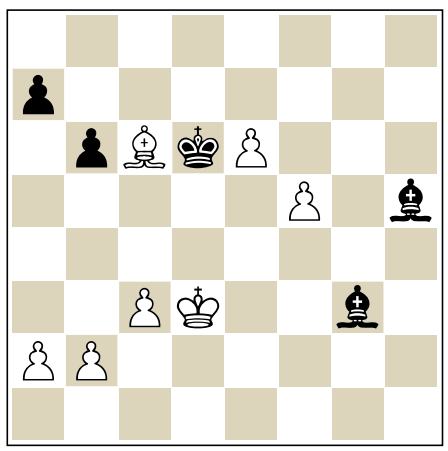
28.♖xd7 ♖xd7 29.♗xd7 ♗c5 30.♔c2 ♗e3 31.f5 ♗f4 32.e6 ♔e7 33.h4 ♗e2



Blockaded and vulnerable the pawns begin to fall one by one.

34.♗c6 ♗g3 35.h5 ♗xh5 36.♔d3 ♔d6?!

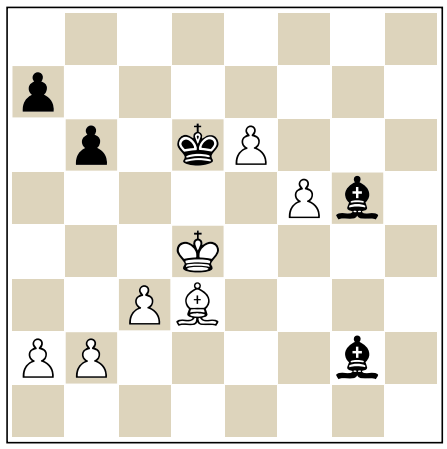
A rare imprecision. 36...♔f6 was more accurate.



Nigel Short (orange cap, sunglasses) is lost in thought as he observes a moment of silence at the grave of Jose Raul Capablanca.

37.♗g2?

After the black king reaches e5, White can resign. Therefore the only hope lay in 37.♗a4!, allowing the white king to centralise, e.g. 37...♗h4 38.♔e4. Ivanchuk was very sceptical that the position could be held, and suggested the plan of first placing the bishop on g5 and then checking on g2 to drive the white king back. However, this is not so easy to attain, as can seen from the following continuation: 38...♗g5 39.♗b5 ♗g4 40.♗d3 ♗h3 41.♔d4 ♗g2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

42.♗e4! ♗f6+ 43.♔e3 ♗f1 44.♔f4!, and it is still not clear how, or if, progress can be made.

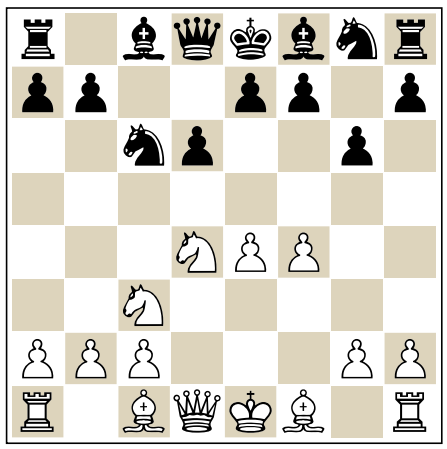
37...♔e5 38.♗h3 ♗h4 39.b4 ♗e7 40.a3 ♗f3 41.♔c4 ♗e2+ 42.♔b3 ♔f4 43.a4 a5

One pawn will amply suffice. White resigned.

Nevertheless I recovered from this debacle, and by the free day at the half way stage, when we went to lay a wreath at the grave of Jose Raul Capablanca, I stood in second place, a point behind Chucky thanks to victories over Alekseev (who was in surprisingly poor form) and bottom-seed Bruzon. At this point the European Champion, Ian Nepomniachtchi, who stood on a modest –1, began winning one game after another. His prettiest victory was against your writer.

SI 49.3 – B74
Nigel Short
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Havana 2010 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 3.f4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 g6 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4

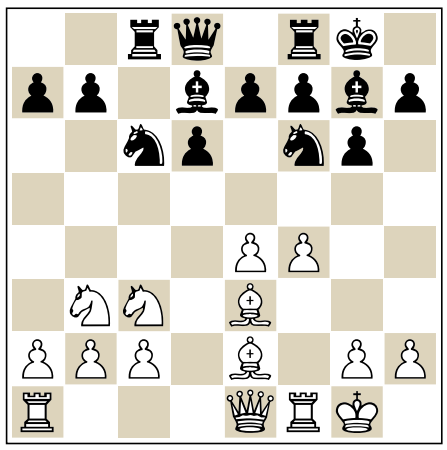


A clever little move order against inveterate Najdorf devotees, tricking the opponent into the Dragon. The only problem, from White's perspective, is that he ends up playing the stupid Levenfish Variation...

6...♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘f6 8.♗e2 ♗d7

Black's unfamiliarity with the position already manifests itself. While this move can hardly be termed a mistake, it is not as accurate as the immediate 8...0-0.

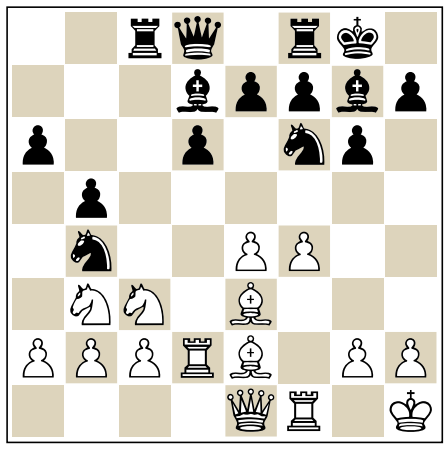
9.♘b3 ♖c8 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕e1



I am not quite sure why I did this, to be honest. Nepomniachtchi was apparently not the only one to be slightly confused.

11...a6 12.♔h1 b5 13.♖d1 ♘b4 14.♖d2

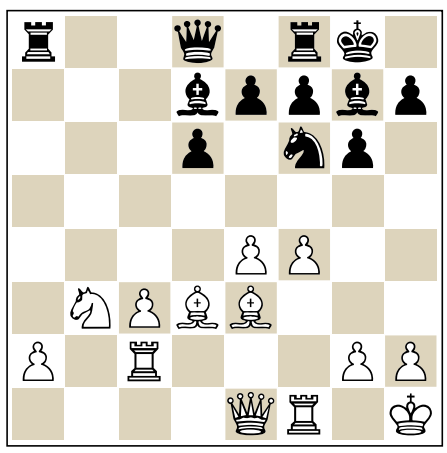
My opponent went into a long think here (slightly late, after having played the committal 13...♘b4), which tends to suggest he had miscalculated something. Nepomniachtchi is undoubtedly immensely talented, but sometimes he is a bit sloppy and carefree in the manner in which he plays...



14...♘xc2

It did occur to me that 14...♘xa2 was also possible, although I wasn't unduly concerned. I think most human beings would rightly prefer White after 15.♘xa2 ♘xe4 16.♖d4!? ♗xd4 17.♗xd4.

15.♖xc2 b4 16.♗xa6 ♖a8 17.♗d3 bxc3 18.bxc3



18...♖a4?!

After the game Ian was (rightly) scathing of this negligent advance, and suggested instead 18...♕c7!, which is indeed better. Interestingly various engines regard this as equal. I didn't, for a moment, imagine I was winning, but nevertheless I generally prefer to have an extra pawn.

19.e5!

Havana 2010 — cat. XVIII

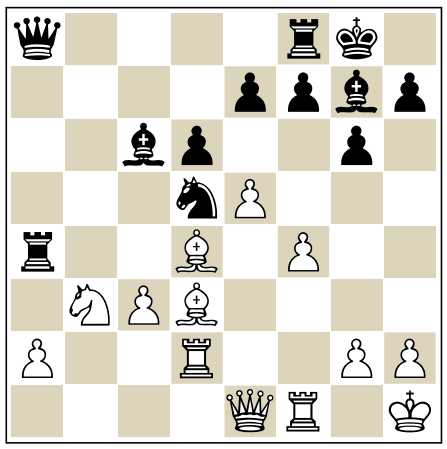
					1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2741	* *	1 ½	½ ½	1 ½	1 ½	½ 1	7	2841
2	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM	RUS	2695	0 ½	* *	½ ½	½ 1	½ 1	½ 1	6	2773
3	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2713	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	5½	2733
4	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2685	0 ½	½ 0	½ ½	* *	1 ½	1 1	5½	2739
5	Evgeny Alekseev	IGM	RUS	2700	0 ½	½ 0	½ 0	0 ½	* *	½ ½	3	2551
6	Lazaro Bruzon	IGM	CUB	2668	½ 0	½ 0	½ ½	0 0	½ ½	* *	3	2557

It is important to cement the bishop on d4.

19...♘d5 20.♗d4 ♗c6 21.♖d2 ♕a8

The most natural.

It was apparently possible to play 21...♘xf4 22.♖xf4 dxe5 23.♗xe5 ♖xf4 24.♗xf4 ♗xc3. Isn't White better here, or has my assessment function gone awry completely? Perhaps it has...



22.exd6?

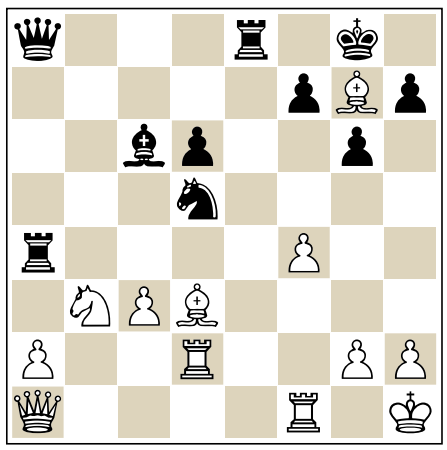
At this point my sense of danger deserted me completely. I couldn't imagine that in a few short moves I would be brutally despatched.

Instead, 22.c4! ♘b4 23.♗b1 dxe5 24.fxe5 (24.♗xe5!?) puts White comfortably on top. The main tactical point is that 24...♘xa2 25.♖b2! leaves the black knight seriously embarrassed.

22...exd6 23.♗xg7 ♖e8!

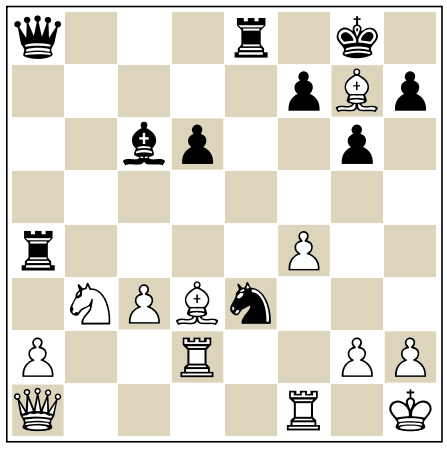
I had begun to realise how awkward this zwischenzug was while waiting for my opponent to move, but I was still suffering from the delusion that somehow, magically, I still ought to stand better. Wrong! White is now fighting to save his posterior...

24.♕a1



24...♘e3

This is the move that concerned me but it transpires that the ugly 24...♘xf4! 25.♖xf4 ♖xf4 might even have been stronger. After 26.♗d4 Black has the powerful blow 26...♗xg2+! 27.♖xg2 ♖g4 when White can only survive the immediate onslaught by means of contortions, e.g. 28.♕g1 ♖e1 29.♗f1 ♖xg2 30.♕xg2 ♖xf1+ 31.♗g1. Nevertheless Black is better.



25.♖g1??

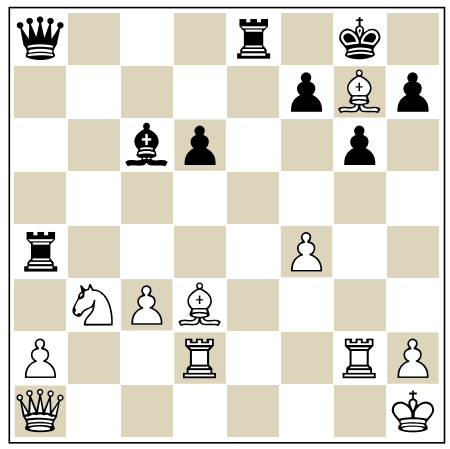
Allowing a glorious finish. When my opponent immediately started shaking his head in disbelief, I knew something grim was about to happen...

25.♗d4 was completely forced. I was concerned about the poor position of my knight after 25...♗xg2+ 26.♔g1 ♗xf1 27.♗xf1 ♘xf1 28.♕xf1 ♖xa2, but it transpires that White should be OK after 29.f5 ♖e4 30.h3!.

25...♘xg2!

25...♗xg2+ is even stronger, but who cares?

26.♖gxg2



26...♖xa2!! 27.♖xa2 ♕xa2!

A different twist on the good old back-rank mate.

28.♗f1 ♗xg2+

White resigned.

With this win, Nepomniachtchi still had a chance to share first place by beating Ivanchuk with black in the final round, but the Ukrainian put up the shutters very quickly. Leinier 'Petrosian' Dominguez, whose play was generally shy of its sparkling best, finally managed to win a game, against the hapless Alekseev, to move into third place where he was joined by the author who downed Bruzon again.

It only remains for me to mention the Closing Ceremony which was enlivened by the attendance of the two candidates for the FIDE Presidential election – the former World Champion Anatoly Karpov, who delivered his speech in Spanish, and the alien-abducted Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who promised many millions (to rapturous applause), as he has so emptily done so many times before. Why anyone still believes anything this man says is one of life's great mysteries...

Tourist turns winner

When, in the spring of 2009, Loek van Wely promised to keep us posted about his adventures on the U.S. chess circuit, the former Dutch champion must have hoped that before long he would add a win to his countless victories in the great opens (New York, Philadelphia, Berlin, Foxwoods, you name them). A couple of times he came close, but it was never close enough. Imagine our (and his) delight when minutes after the last round of the Chicago Open we received a text message saying that this time he'd report from the winner's perspective.

BETSY DYNAKO

Loek van Wely

And so it was back to Chicago, where last year I finished shared third, half a point behind top-finishers Ehlvest and Sargissian. This time I hoped to write my impressions not from a tourist point of view, but from the winner's... Although I must admit I enjoy visiting Chicago. Last year I went to see a match of the Cubs, this year I had to go to the White Sox. Stuffed with hotdogs and popcorn I managed to get a very nice sunburn. The atmosphere was great. I just hope that LeBron James decides to play for the Bulls next year, so I may have a chance to see them in the playoffs of the NBA. Having penned these initial lines, I am just wondering if Tivi and Nigel S., two notorious tourists, will be proud of me if they read this.

Anyway, when I arrived in Chicago I expected the tournament to be less strong than last year. Normally it works like this: after a strong edition many players don't feel tempted to take part.

in Chicago

The 19th Chicago Open was held in the conference rooms of the elegant Westin Chicago North Shore Hotel.

And the same goes for a weak edition, but then in the opposite direction. However, upon my arrival I noticed Mickey Adams, which of course was a small setback for my tournament ambitions. Obviously, I was curious about his reasons to play in Chicago. His 'excuse' was quite remarkable: he wanted to be part of my Chicago report! ☺ And if this wasn't convincing enough yet: 'I was on my way to Florida.' So now I understand that it's all my fault and I should apologize to all American GMs for writing these reports. Hopefully nobody gets the idea of suing me... As Paul Newman said to Tom Cruise in *The Color of Money*: 'This place is dead now!'

To make matters even worse, having seen the final result of this tournament, some people may think 'Hey, if he can do it, I can do it too!' (not to say: better). It is as if a nuclear bomb has fallen on Chicago and we have to wait a couple of years till the radiation has gone down to acceptable levels....

I must say that, generally speaking, open tournaments have become very tough. Just look at the recent European Championship, with 200 GMs. If you've ever wondered whether GMs are clever, this may help you come to the final verdict ☺. A few months back my good friend and rival, politician, real estate agent and manager, Ivan S. was playing in the open in Cappelle-la-Grande. After five rounds he finally re-

alized that something had gone wrong (a conclusion that I completely disagreed with. I was enjoying myself, and I am pretty sure that other friends such as Jan T. and Nigel S. were doing the same) when he was playing a couple of hundred boards behind my girlfriend...

In fact, as it was, she was also closing in on me during the Chicago Open, when at some point she was on 4 out of 6, while I had 4½. For a while I was thinking, maybe it is a good idea to keep my big mouth shut, but 36 hours later my mouth was back in business ☺.

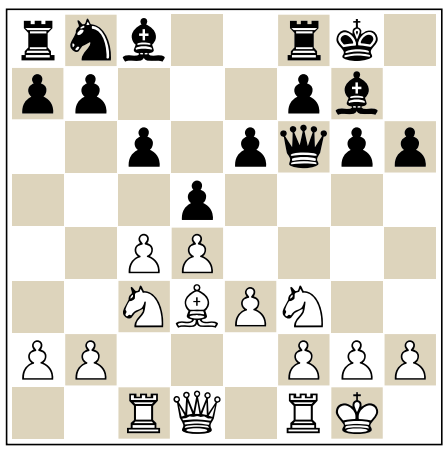
Open tournaments in the States are very different from European ones. The biggest difference is that you have to play two games a day, which means no time for preparation. Well, you don't even know the name of your opponent till five minutes before the start of the round. This means you have to be in good shape and have a good standard repertoire, whereas in Europe you will meet a well rested and well prepared opponent. Mr. Timman wrote a nice article in New In Chess about my Najdorf preparation for the last Corus tournament. I don't want to go into details, but I am convinced that my preparation was indeed pretty good (but my memory sucked like never before and my brain wasn't working). Still, I don't want you to miss the following anecdote from Corus 2008. Topalov plays his bombshell novelty ♘xf7 against Kramnik. The next day, Timman plays the same sacrifice against Ljubojevic. I walk over to Jan and tell him, 'It's such a pity that Topalov was one day earlier to show his novelty.' Jan smiled. But then I tell him, 'I hope you have analysed the move ♖hg8.' You don't need to be Einstein to find this move, all engines suggest it, maybe with the exception of Jan's Commodore 64 (or was it his Atari?). Jan immediately turned pale, and without saying a word ran off to his board to analyse this move. A few minutes later, when I passed by his board, I saw that Ljubo had indeed played this move and my friend Jan was sitting there with his head like a tomato ☺.

Now it's time to move on to the tournament. The general impression was that nobody was going to make +6 (meaning 7½ out of 9), so plus 5 was the magic score. The first player to reach +5 was Giorgi Kacheishvili. In his crucial game to reach plus 5, he managed to outplay Evgeny Najer in his beloved Caro-Kann. However, in the next round, although he was playing with white, he lost control.

SL 6.8 – D43
Giorgi Kacheishvili
Loek van Wely
Chicago 2010 (8)

Before this game I wasn't in a particularly aggressive mood. I was playing a serious grandmaster, after all, and I still had one white to go. But things can change quickly and you have to be ready to adapt to new circumstances.

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.e3 g6 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖c1



Here Giorgi offered me a draw, which I refused. I didn't refuse the draw offer because my position was so great (in fact it's very difficult to crack White's position if he doesn't do something strange), but I felt my opponent wasn't at ease...

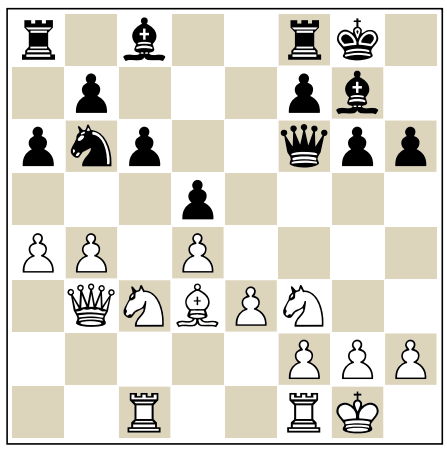
10...♘d7 11.cxd5?!

I don't like this move. It releases the tension and gives Black easy play. I would have played 11.b4 at once.

11...exd5 12.b4 a6 13.♕b3 ♘b6

13...♕d6 gives White the chance to open up the position with 14. e4, and I think Black isn't ready for this yet.

14.a4

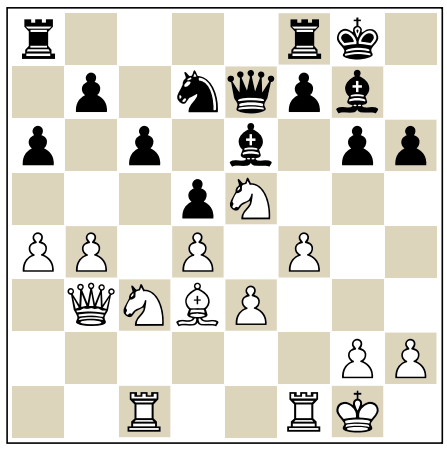


14...♗e6

Now Black is ready to counter the traditional minority attack on the queenside.

On 15.b5 both 15...cxb5 16.axb5 a5 and 15...axb5 16.axb5 c5 17. dxc5 d4 are good for Black.

15.♘e5 ♕e7 16.f4 ♘d7



17.a5?

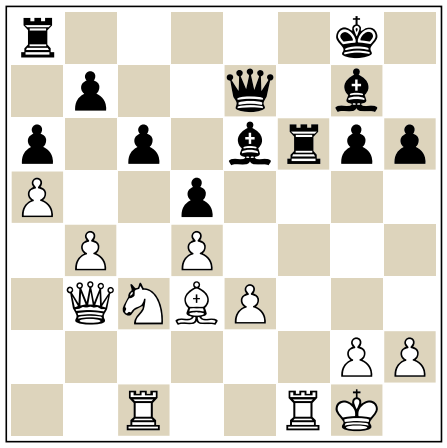
Locking up the queenside, but unfortunately for White he now cannot keep his centre.

He didn't like to play 17.♕b1, as it allows 17...a5, yet this would have been the lesser evil.

BETSY DYNAKO

Loek van Wely at a point in his game against Giorgi Kacheishvili when he was not yet in an aggressive mood.

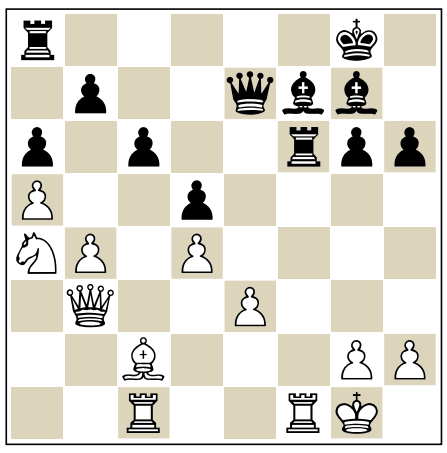
17...♘xe5 18.fxe5 f6! 19.exf6 ♖xf6



20.♘a4?

Another ambitious move to put his knight on c5. However, the action will be on the other side....

20...♗f7 21.♗c2

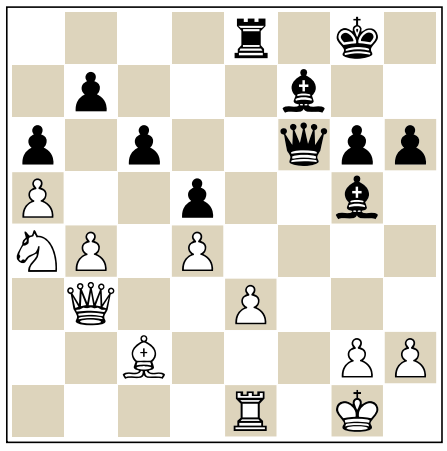


Here I thought for a while and managed to calculate it till the end.

21...♖e8

Instead of the text, 21...♖e6 also looks strong, but the text is more straightforward.

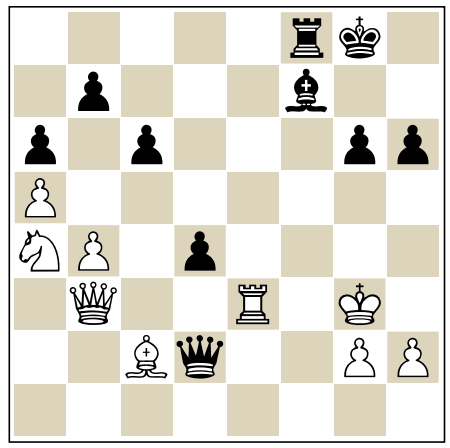
22.♖xf6 ♗xf6 23.♔f2 ♗g5 24. ♖e1 ♕f6+ 25.♔g1



25...♗xe3+! 26.♖xe3 ♕xd4 27.♔f2 ♕d2+ 28.♔f3 ♖f8!

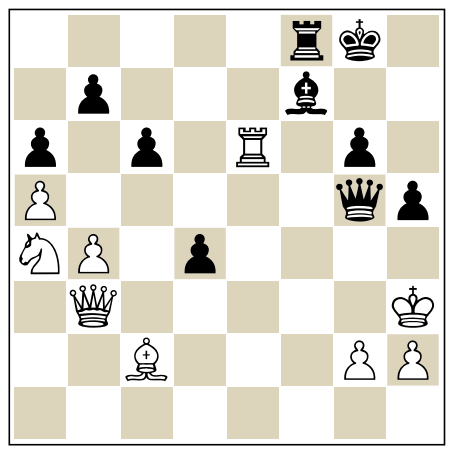
Going for the white king! 28...♖xe3+ 29.♕xe3 ♕xc2 would leave Black two pawns up, but why not to be greedy and go for more? ☺

29.♔g3 d4



This was the idea.

30.♖e6 ♕g5+ 31.♔h3 ♕h5+ 32.♔g3 ♕g5+ 33.♔h3 h5!

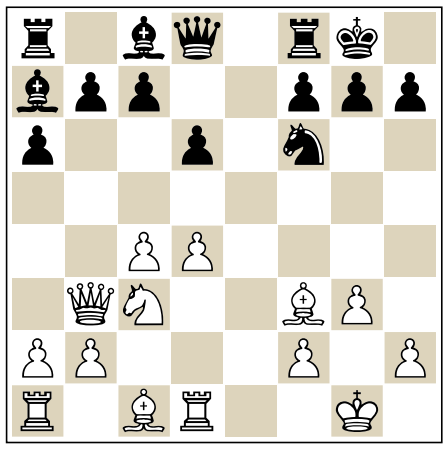


The final finesse! White resigned, as 34.♖xg6+ ♕xg6 35.♗xg6 ♗xb3 is hopeless for Black.

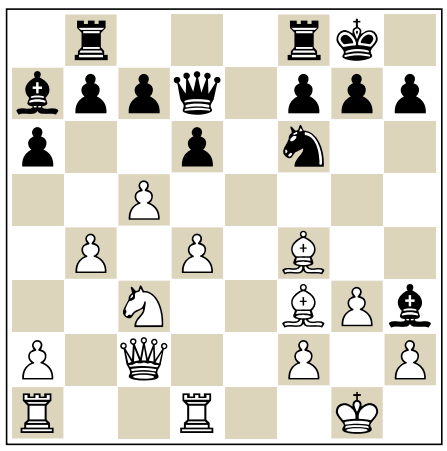
With this win I reached plus 5, but I had two companions with the same score, Varuzhan Akobian, who had just beaten Khachiyan (my nemesis from Reno) and Samuel Shankland, who had escaped against Ehlvest. Akobian was paired down with black against Adams. I admit I didn't mind this pairing ☺. On the other hand, I was paired as White versus Shankland. It was clear that Varuzhan wasn't going to have an easy afternoon. He got a passive position, ended up in time-trouble, lost patience, got active and got tricked. To me it was clear that at least I should try hard to win (but not at all cost).

EO 4.8 – A29
Loek van Wely
Samuel Shankland
Chicago 2010 (9)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♘d4
Black chooses the most solid approach. Result: White wasn't happy for a while!
5.♗g2 ♘xf3+ 6.♗xf3 ♗b4 7.♕b3 ♗c5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♖d1 a6?!
Already a step in the wrong direction. It was better to insert 9...♖e8, which would slow down White's expansion in the centre because he needs to reckon with ...e4.
10.e3
Now Black cannot hold his centre.
10...d6 11.d4 exd4 12.exd4 ♗a7



So now the question is: does Black have pressure on White's centre or is the bishop on a7 out of play? We will have the answer soon enough!
13.♗f4 ♖b8 14.♕c2 ♗h3 15.c5! ♕d7 16.b4

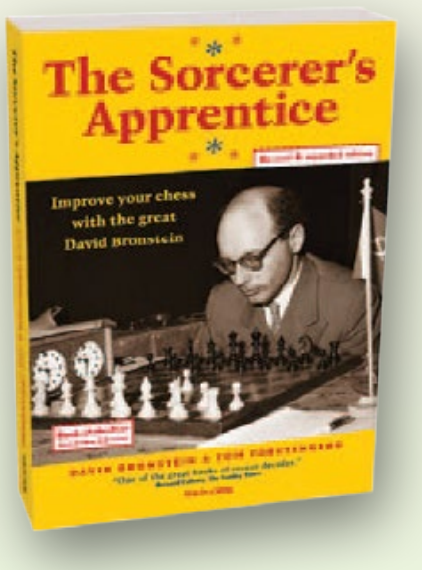


Fortifying White's pawn chain. Meanwhile, the bishop on a7 starts looking a bit bleak, helplessly biting on granite.
16...♖fe8 17.♖e1 dxc5 18.dxc5 ♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 ♖e8 20.♖xe8+

Chicago 2010

					$
1	Van Wely	IGM	NED	2653	7½	10200
2	Adams	IGM	ENG	2697	7	2425
3	Najer	IGM	RUS	2663	7	2425
4	Mikhalevski	IGM	ISR	2614	7	2425
5	Stocek	IGM	CZE	2593	7	2425
6	Gareev	IGM	UZB	2599	6½	433
7	Akobian	IGM	USA	2599	6½	433
8	Ehlvest	IGM	USA	2591	6½	433
9	Shabalov	IGM	USA	2585	6½	433
10	Yermolinsky	IGM	USA	2528	6½	433
11	Shankland	IM	USA	2507	6½	433
12	Kleiman	FM	USA	2353	6½	3000
13	Kacheishvili	IGM	GEO	2580	6	
14	Sedlak	IGM	SRB	2567	6	
15	Khachiyan	IGM	USA	2539	6	
16	Perelshteyn	IGM	USA	2534	6	
17	Amanov	IGM	TKM	2479	6	
18	Vojinovic	IM	SRB	2447	6	366
19	Molner	-	USA	2439	6	366
20	Kekelidze	IGM	GEO	2436	6	366
21	Bercys	IM	USA	2427	6	366
22	Mulyar	IM	USA	2398	6	366
23	Almeida	IM	MEX	2380	6	366
24	Abrahamyan	WFM	USA	2290	6	2250
25	Kaufman	IM	USA	2286	6	2250

149 players, 9 rounds



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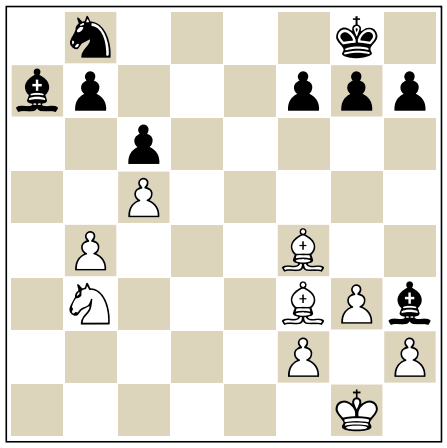
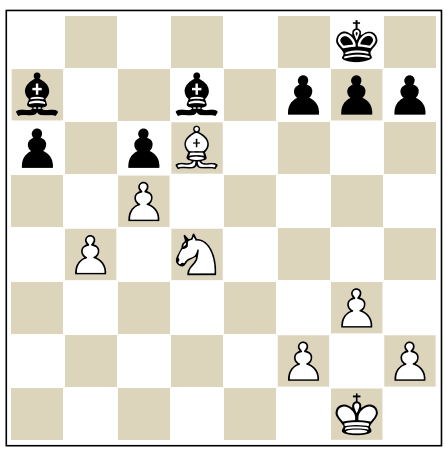
♕xe8 21.♕e2 ♕xe2 22.♘xe2 c6
Black has managed to exchange some pieces and to ease the pressure on the queenside somewhat. Now he only has to solve that last issue of the bishop on a7....
23.♘d4 a5 24.a3 axb4 25.axb4 ♘d7 26.♘b3 ♘b8
In retrospect it might have been better to play 26...♗b8 27.♘a5 ♗xf4 28.gxf4 b6 29.cxb6 ♘xb6 30.♘xc6, and in this endgame Black may have some chances to save himself.



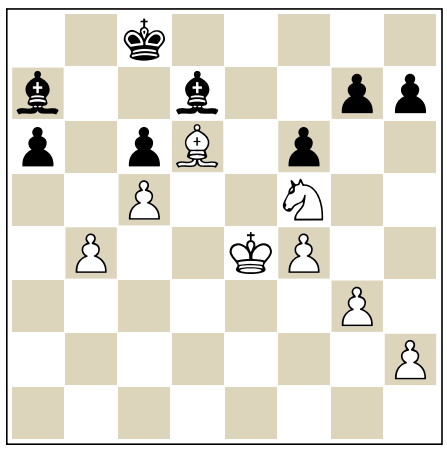
27.♗e2!
Thematic, but the breakthrough with 27.b5 cxb5 28.♗xb7 wins even faster, because the c-pawn cannot be stopped.
27...♘a6 28.♗xa6!
The point! Now White's bishop on d6 will dominate its counterpart on a7 and the knight on d4 will play against the bad bishop on d7. A bishop pair is not always so great!
28...bxa6 29.♘d4 ♗d7 30.♗d6



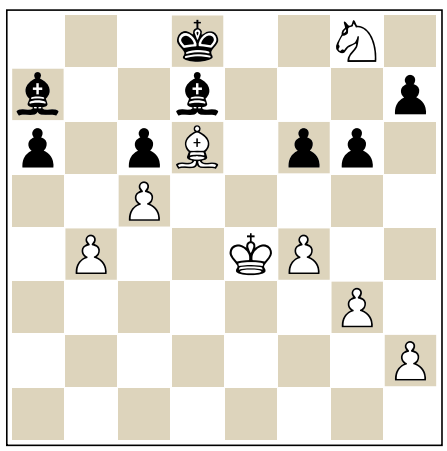
30...f6 31.f4 ♔f7 32.♔f2 ♔e8 33.♔e3 ♔d8 34.♔e4 ♔c8 35.♘f5

BETSY DYNAKO

Samuel Shankland was close to a big prize and his GM title, but a stupid bishop on a7 did him in.



Provoking Black's pawns, so that White's king can penetrate decisively.
35...g6 Or 35...♗xf5+ 36.♔xf5 ♔d7 37.g4, with zugzwang.
36.♘e7+ ♔d8 37.♘g8!



And Black resigned, as after 37...f5+ 38.♔e5 the penetration of the white king decides the issue.

Unfortunately for my opponent Samuel Shankland, he needed a draw in the last round to get his GM title. Stuff like that always puts you in an awkward and especially vulnerable position. I wasn't aware of it, but if I had been, I am pretty sure I would have tried to use it to my favour. In these tournaments there is little space for playing Mr. Nice Guy. Apart from that, there were too many not so nice guys breathing in my neck, planning to take a piece of the 10 K...

On a final note, with pain in my heart I have to skip the National Open in Las Vegas this year (but in December there is a second chance), so my next stop will be the World Open in Philadelphia! Soon we will be able to put a cross through the city of Philadelphia as a no-go area... ☺

Battling till the End

Last year the Icelandic film *Me and Bobby Fischer*, directed by Fridrik Gudmundsson, came out on DVD. Hans Ree enjoyed the 'extra exclusive bonus material', which has Fischer talking for 83 minutes, more than the film itself.

The Icelandic hamlet of Laugardaelir has around 30 inhabitants. Since 2008, when Bobby Fischer was buried there, a few tour operators have scheduled a short stop in the village to enable tourists to visit Bobby's grave, but the locals have not tried to make a Graceland of the place, preferring to let him rest in peace. Soon Bobby's peace will be disturbed.

I have visited Iceland only once, but I always liked the idea of Iceland. A tiny population of 300,000, far away from the rest of Europe, that not only managed to create a viable economy, but has made the country one of the most civilized in the world, with a decent standard of living, admirable social equality and an abundance of artists, writers and scientists.

After the collapse of Iceland's banks I felt ashamed of the harsh treatment that the country received from my Dutch government. You don't do that to the great people that saved Bobby Fischer from his detention in Japan.

Getting along with Bobby, during his lifetime and afterwards, often led to trouble. Somehow the small group that, early in 2008, interred him at the church graveyard of Laugardaelir got away with it without problems, which I found hard to understand. Snatching a dead body from the hospital without authorization, putting it under the ground some time between night and morning, without the pastor of the church or the secular authorities knowing anything about it, one would think that there were laws to forbid such a 'guerrilla burial', as the British *Telegraph* called it. But no measures were taken by the Icelandic authorities. Maybe they were relieved that the lid on Bobby's coffin was finally sealed.

Battle of the Lawyers

However, on July 5 the lid was reopened or rather a hole was drilled in the side of the coffin, because the Icelandic Supreme Court decided in June that Fischer's body must be exhumed, overturning an earlier decision by the District Court of Reykjavik.

A DNA sample was taken from Bobby's body for comparison with one of the Philippine girl Jinky Young, daughter of Marilyn Young, to establish if Bobby is really the girl's biological father.

We do not know how much money Fischer left, but his estate was estimated to be worth around two million euros, though with lawyers all over the place the final pay-off might be rapidly dwindling.

Dancing around the golden calf are the lawyers of Fischer's wife Miyoko Watai, of Marilyn Young and of Russell Targ, who represents his two sons from Bobby's deceased sister Joan.

Targ is an internationally famous parapsychologist who, among other things, 'proved' that the trickster Uri Geller had real psychic powers. Targ and his colleague Hall Puthoff have been called 'the Laurel and Hardy of psi' by the Amazing Randy, scourge of sham psychics, but this comparison has been condemned as a grave offence to Laurel and Hardy.

In her 1995 book *Bobby Fischer – Wie er wirklich ist – Ein Jahr mit dem Schachgenie*, Petra Dautov relates a conversation with Bobby about the time that he had stayed in Joan's apartment. After a while Joan had thrown him out, because she couldn't stand the perpetual arguments about her intended marriage to Targ, who, being Jewish, was bound to make her miserable, according to Fischer. 'But isn't she Jewish herself?' asked Petra naïvely. Of course Bobby didn't buy that.

Apart from these individuals the American taxman is also waiting for his due.

Without going into legal details, I find the case for Marilyn and Jinky Young emotionally strengthened by a photo that shows Bobby and the Youngs in bed. Bobby looks happy there.

I wondered whether the Philippine connection, which goes back at least as far as 1973, when Bobby met and playfully played 'chess' with Ferdinand Marcos, may have influenced his hatred of the U.S. The genocidal colonial war that the U.S. waged around 1900 against the Philippines will not be forgotten there, and I can imagine that the facts about the atrocities made a strong impression on Bobby, especially because in the West hardly a soul knows or cares about them.

Mainly about Saemi

The film *Me & Bobby Fischer*, directed by Fridrik Gudmundsson, premiered in April 2009 at an Icelandic film festival and was brought out as a DVD in the same year. Unfortunately it is not a very good film.

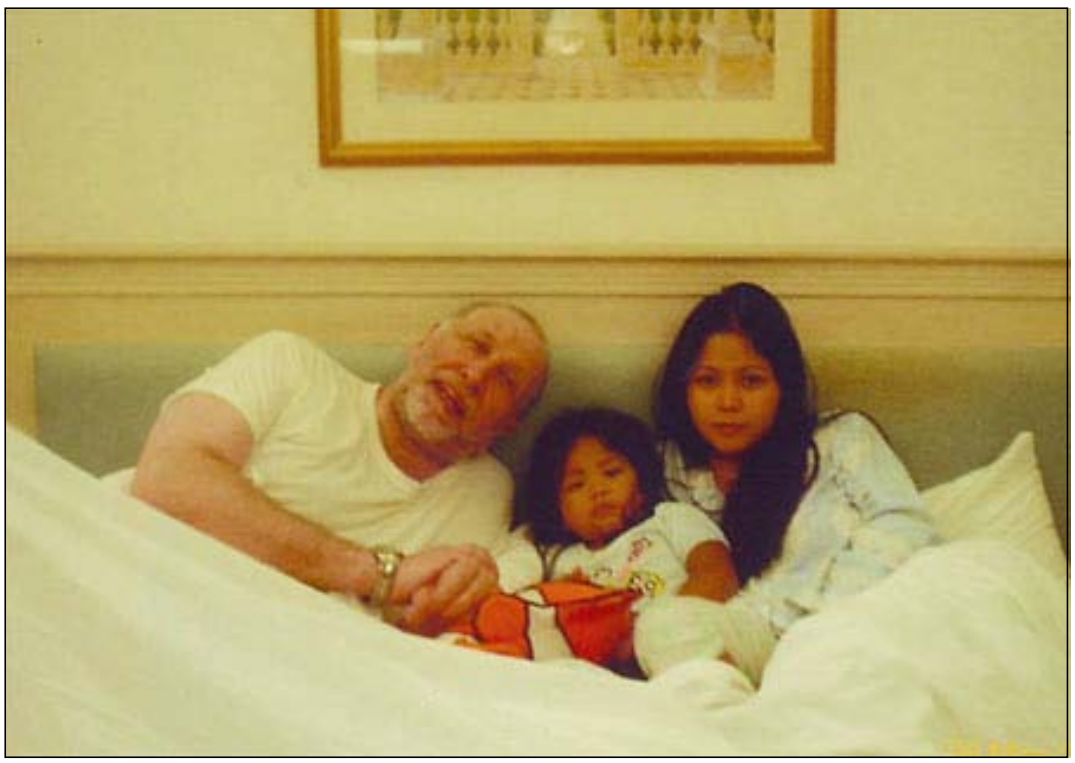
The Me of the title is Saemundur (Saemi) Palsson, a former policeman, carpenter and rock dancer who had his days of fame during the World Championship match in 1972, when he became Bobby's confidant.

In his amusing book *Bobby Fischer vs. the Rest of the World* Brad Darrach wrote: 'Flightseeing, salmon-fishing, pony riding, having dinner with Anna and Inga – Bobby and Palsson now spent every waking hour together.' Anna and Inga were two young Icelandic girls that had been introduced to Bobby by Saemi.

After the match Bobby wanted Saemi to come with him to the U.S. and live there. Saemi did indeed follow the master, but after a few months in the U.S. he was disappointed and went back to his wife in Iceland.

In 2004 he received a late-night collect call from Bobby from a payphone at the prison in Japan. It was a call for help. Early in the film Saemi says: 'He had me in a drawer and then opened it and took me out again.'

He takes a plane to Tokyo, where he meets the *Committee to Free Bobby Fischer*, a small group headed by the Canadian-Serbian journalist and political activist John Bosnitch.



A photo of Bobby Fischer together with Marilyn and Jinky Young that should be part of the proof that the American was the father of the little girl.

Film director Fridrik Gudmundsson has said: 'I wasn't really interested in Bobby Fischer. I was only interested in Saemi and his friendship with Bobby Fischer.' This seems bad news for many viewers, as most of them will be more interested in Fischer, even the Icelanders.

Of course, fine films can be made about people who are not famous, but this one I found dull. Long shots of Saemi at a Japanese airport or in Japanese trains. Internal discussions of the Free Bobby committee that are difficult to follow. A long scene at a tourist resort, set up so that Saemi can give some background information to a few fellow-tourists and to film-viewers who are wondering what is going on.

One Icelandic review said: 'It may take more than one viewing to fully comprehend and sort out what has been seen and how it all fits together (if indeed it does).' I didn't test it, but I think that to establish what's happening, and when and where, a second viewing will not help people who were not well-informed about Fischer in the first place.

I read two Icelandic reviews of the film. They were basically favourable, but both noticed a lack of momentum at points. I suppose a lack of momentum is what I brutally called 'dull'.

A Good Hard Punch

About halfway the film Bobby Fischer, who up to that point had appeared only on historical footage – with shots of bomber planes for Cold War atmosphere – or as a voice on radio or on the phone, appears in the flesh. From there it becomes more interesting for Fischer fans.

We see and hear him talking in a private jet, in cars and in a hotel in Reykjavik. Stately ducks swim

in a pond in Reykjavik, happy that Bobby is free.

In fact I found the 'extras', which fill a separate DVD of 83 minutes, more interesting than the film itself. This 'extra exclusive bonus material', left-over shootings not used for the film, gives us Bobby talking all the time.

Of course we get the extreme statements that we expect. Sometimes Bobby is pampered. 'Of course America is terrible', says Saemi, patting Bobby on the shoulders in the car that brings them from Stockholm to Malmö, where the private plane, hired by Iceland's Channel 2, will take off to bring him to Reykjavik.

When Bobby tells how in Japan he punched a guard in the face and then was viciously tortured, all passengers in the car commiserate at the injustice of it.

By the way, these details, Stockholm, Malmö, private plane and Channel 2, I learned only from a google search. Viewers of the film are left in the dark about where the car is going or the plane is flying.

In general Bobby is remarkably subdued when he is contradicted. When he is told that people are worried about his anti-Semitic statements, he understands. 'Everybody is worried when I speak about the Jews', he says. But he sticks to his guns. Though he would like to accommodate his hosts, he refuses to promise to keep his mouth shut in public about the issue. Haven't they noticed that on old engravings the Devil often has the face of a Jew?

Saving the Planet

Kari Stefansson is a neurologist and head of a biopharmaceutical firm called deCODE Genetics. In one review he is praised for being the only person who stands up against Bobby's outrageous statements. He certainly does, even a bit too much to my taste. He treats Bobby like a child.

Partly in the main film and partly in the extras we can follow a long discussion between Bobby and Kari about the modern world. Bobby doesn't like genetics and the prospects of manipulating human life. Kari says that you can't forbid the growth of knowledge.

Bobby disagrees and says: 'Nobody just discovers, they want to do something.' He talks about nuclear physicists, saying that they grabbed the chance to make themselves important by working on the atom bomb, but were then discarded by the American government when it didn't need them anymore.

Bobby thinks that scientists are destroying the planet. Survival is the name of the game, he says. Kari: 'You are not God.' Bobby laughs and says: 'I'm just trying to save the planet.'

He starts at home. Somewhere else in the film he asks Saemi to persuade the mayor of Reykjavik to stop putting chlorine in the swimming pool.

Kari and Bobby battle on. 'In two seconds Reykjavik can be reduced to a heap of radioactive rubble', Bobby says. 'I don't want to talk about nuclear scientists anymore', says Kari. Bobby obliges, but soon afterwards he comes back to the subject. 'You are too focused on the negatives in the world', says Kari, and Bobby agrees: 'Yeah, that's true.'

The conversation is continued at a dinner table in a hotel restaurant, in the presence of Bobby's wife Miyoko Watai, who keeps silent. In the film the sparring between Kari and Bobby is interrupted by a shot of Saemi telling about Bobby's anger when his Swiss bank transferred his money to an Icelandic account: 'Somehow he didn't want to have the money in Iceland, even though I told him that the interest here was higher. Somehow all geniuses are a bit strange.' Obviously this statement was taken before the collapse of the Icelandic banks.

The conversation between Kari and Bobby takes a nasty turn. Kari tells him to stop spouting his anti-Semitic views in public. 'I'll try,

Before he was taken to hospital Bobby Fischer spent the last months of his life in an apartment in the building where his closest friend Gardar Sverrisson lived.

but I can't promise', says Bobby. 'I don't need promises, I'm just telling you', snaps Kari, who then accuses Bobby of coprolalia and Tourette syndrome. 'What's coprolalia?' asks Bobby. When it is explained to him, he says: 'Yeah, the Jews often say that about me.'

How can Kari be in a position to order Bobby to keep his mouth shut? It seems to me that he wants to make a business deal about a high-profile Fischerandom tournament. If only Bobby would behave. 'Maybe we can ask an Arab TV station', says Bobby. Kari turns to some people out of sight, maybe the camera crew, and says condescendingly: 'He hasn't lost his sense of humour.'

I thought that Kari Stefansson was trying to have his cake and eat it. Being both the high-minded paragon of reason, telling Bobby what he can say and what not, and at the same time acting as an entrepreneur trying to make money with him. But maybe I'm wrong. As I wrote earlier, it is difficult to make out what exactly is going on in the film.

He Always Hated Chess

Some of Bobby's Icelandic saviours may have cherished hopes that out of gratitude he would represent Iceland at Olympiads, but these hopes were quickly dispelled.

He said that he hated chess and disliked chess players, who on the whole were mean and jealous, mentally crooked because they all have to fish in the same small pond. Jazz musicians are much nicer to each other, he found.

He thought that the rot in chess had not started with the pre-arranged matches between Kasparov and Karpov (says Bobby, not me), or with the computer-aided opening preparation of modern times. Even in Morphy's time the seeds of doom were already present. Too much theory already then. He had found that he had hated chess all the time, but only gradually came to realize it.

I was sad to find that his once near-perfect memory failed him occasionally, as when he said that maybe two hundred years ago chess was still alright, at the time of... 'Who's that man who developed the pawns theory, the Frenchman...' Or when he didn't remember whether the match between Capablanca and Alekhine was in 1927 or 1928.

That was a very important match for Fischer, for as in the film he still believes that Capablanca would have kept his title at 5-5 (a point not quite resolved but extremely unlikely) it serves as a vindication for his demand in 1975 that in his match against Karpov he would keep his title at 9-9.

Ridiculously fair conditions, he calls them in the film. Against this an argument can be made, but I think that they were indeed fairer to the challenger than the conditions that Botvinnik arranged for himself, and later Karpov.

Fear of Profiteers

Of course you can argue against many of Bobby's opinions. Or let it go and shrug your shoulders. But here we see Saemi, all the time stressing the fact that he is a regular guy who sees it as his main task to restrain Bobby's anti-Semitic blabber. Or Kari, doing the same, though more openly and honestly, while trying to make a business deal.

The director of the film Fridrik Gudmundsson called Bobby a decent guy. 'I knew him and spoke to him and went to the bar with him. It was not a friendship. He was a likeable guy. Very likeable. Very friendly.'

Bobby became less friendly when he realized what Gudmundsson was up to.

In 2007 an open letter appeared from the *RJF Campaign Group*. This is the small group, which includes some prominent Icelandic chess players, that had campaigned to rescue Bobby from his Japanese detention.

The letter said, among other things: 'Mr. Fischer wishes the group to draw attention to the fact that the manuscript and structure of the aforementioned "documentary" of which he is the main subject, are grossly inconsistent with former discussions and that the material has been obtained by fraud.' Bobby probably didn't know about the extra bonus material yet.

This revealed a big split within the Icelandic rescue team, the RJF group on one side and Saemi Palsson, the hero of the film, on the other side.

When the film was presented, Gudmundsson said that there had been an "honorary agreement" with Fischer, who had allowed him to do anything he wanted with the material. Fischer was dead and couldn't contradict him, but for anyone who has followed the life and struggles of Bobby Fischer, Gudmundsson's claim will be difficult to believe.

All his life Bobby Fischer was in fear of people who wanted to make a profit out of him, and though his reactions were often extreme, one cannot say that these fears were unjustified.

Fear causes loneliness. After his death ChessBase wrote on its website: 'Fischer stayed in an apartment in the same building as his closest friend and spokesman, Gardar Sverrisson, whose wife Kristin happens to be a nurse and looked after the terminally ill patient. Gardar's two children, especially his son, were very close to Bobby. They were his only friends and contacts during the two last years of his life.'

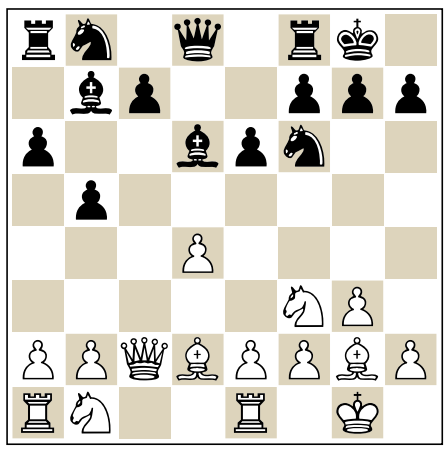
JAN TIMMAN

Sharp games from Siberia

With the Sofia rules being adopted more and more widely, a curious phenomenon is making itself felt: more and more move repetitions in the opening, some of them well-known, others new yet pretty obvious. An example: in Astrakhan, two rounds before the end, Eljanov was a full point ahead of his nearest pursuers, one of whom was Yakovenko. Eljanov-Yakovenko from the penultimate round was drawn as follows:

CA 5.6 – E06
Pavel Eljanov
Dmitry Yakovenko
Astrakhan 2010 (12)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 ♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♕c2 a6 8.♕xc4 b5 9.♕c2 ♗b7 10.♗d2 ♗d6 11.♖e1

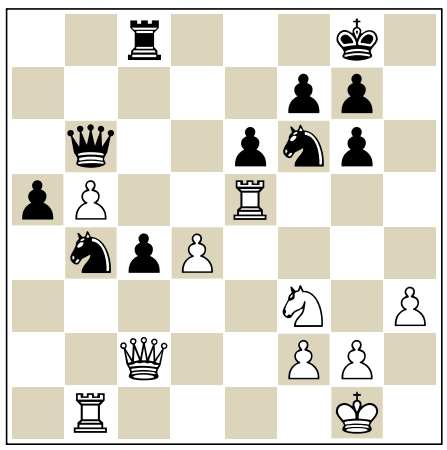


11...♗e4 12.♕c1 ♗b7 13.♕c2 ♗e4 14.♕c1 ♗b7 15.♕c2
Draw.

This exact sequence had not been seen before, yet it added nothing to opening theory, let alone to making this game a fight.

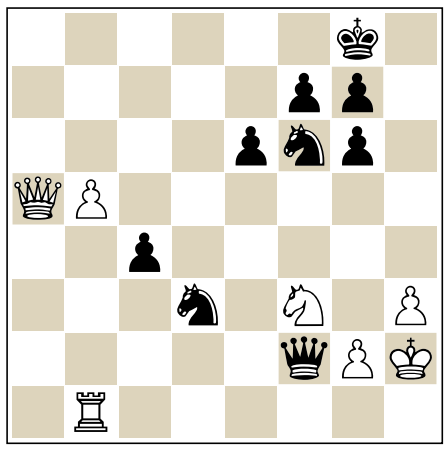
In the 11th Poikovsky Karpov Tournament the Sofia rules were not enforced. This event saw 11 short draws pure and simple, while three more games that just passed the 20-move mark could hardly be called fights. By modern standards this is a pretty high percentage, but it didn't prevent Poikovsky from being an interesting tournament, which is not really a surprise with fighters like Karjakin, Sokolov and Riazantsev.

The game between the latter two saw the worst reciprocal blunder I had seen for a long time at this level.



Riazantsev-Sokolov
position after 27...♘b4

Black clearly has ample compensation for the exchange.
28.♖c5??
This is definitely not the solution for White's problems.
28...♖xc5??
Sokolov doesn't see it either. After 28...♕xc5! 29.dxc5 ♘xc2 Black would simply stay a piece up. The white passed pawns are not dangerous, since the black knight can return to b4.
29.dxc5 ♕xc5 30.♕a4 ♘d3
Stronger is 30...c3, with equal chances.
31.♕xa5 ♕xf2+ 32.♔h2

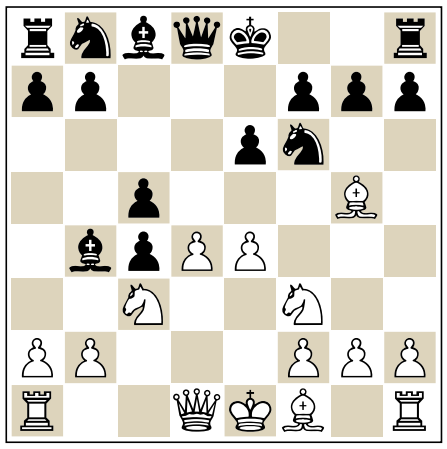


32...♘e4? Another blunder, and after **33.♕a8+** Black resigned, but White already had a huge plus. This shared chess blindness was all the more remarkable because neither player was in serious time-trouble.

Riazantsev is a very interesting player with a sharp and well-considered repertoire, especially as White. His game against Naiditsch was worthwhile in every respect.

NI 27.14 –D37
Alexander Riazantsev
Arkady Naiditsch
Poikovsky 2010 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4 ♗b4 6.♗g5 c5

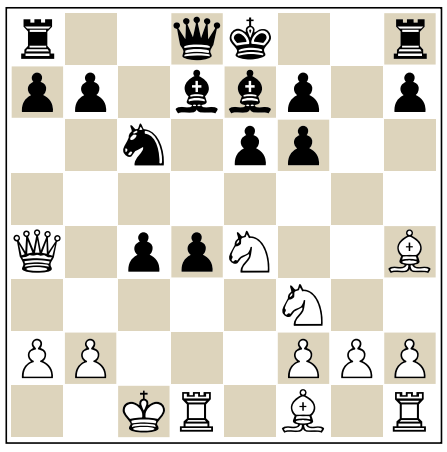


7.e5

The start of the sharpest line of the Vienna Variation. This advance was first played in Fine-Grünfeld, Amsterdam 1936.

7...cxd4 8.♕a4+ ♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♗d7 10.♘e4 ♗e7 11.exf6 gxf6 12.♗h4

A crucial theoretical position has arisen.

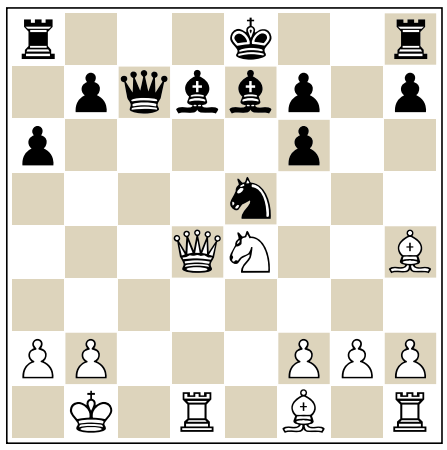


12...♕c7

A new move, intended to enable a queen sortie to f4. Fine-Grünfeld continued 12...♘b4? 13.♕xb4! ♗xb4 14.♘xf6+ ♔f8 15.♖xd4, and White won. This is another important point of White's play, which will also arise in this game, albeit in a slightly different version.

12...♘a5 had long been by far Black's most popular choice, but in recent years black players have increasingly preferred allowing the c-pawn to be captured in order to be able to use the open c-file for attacks against the white king. This can be done in two ways, viz.:

– 12...a6. First played in Van Wely-Morozevich, Monaco 2002. In Riazantsev-Perunovic, Plovdiv 2008, play continued 13.♕xc4 e5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♕xd4 ♕c7+ 16.♔b1

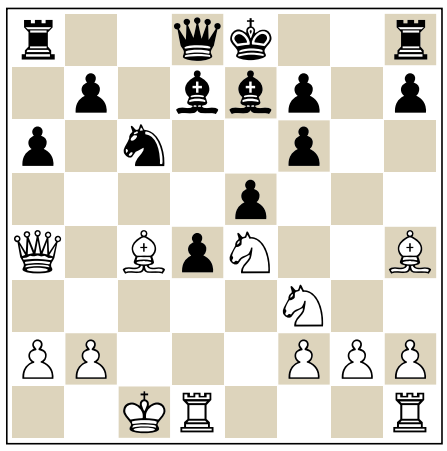


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16...♖c8?. Now White could have got a decisive advantage with 17.♗xa6! (instead of 17.♗e2).

In Zhou Jianchao-Wang Hao, Chinese championship 2010, Black played better: after 16...♗f5 (instead of 16...♖c8) 17.♕a4+ ♔f8 18.f3 ♔g7 19.♗e2 b5 20.♕d4 ♖hd8 the position was roughly equal, as the weakened black pawn structure is compensated for by Black's active piece play.

– 12...e5. This is the sharpest possible move. Black allows the bishop to capture on c4, knowing that White will not have a good way to return the piece. There is little experience with this move in serious games. In the rapid game Anand-Kosteniuk, Moscow 2009, Black quickly got a winning position after 13.♗xc4 a6



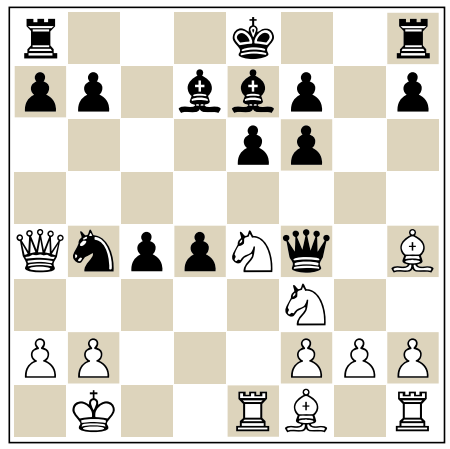
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

14.♕b3? ♘a5! 15.♗xf7+ ♔f8. This is clear proof that this is a difficult position to play off the cuff. Correct is 14.♗d3, after which the game can transpose to Sasikiran-Horvath, Mainz 2007, which saw: 13.♗xc4 ♖c8 14.♔b1 a6 15.♗d3 0-0, and now 16.♖c1 (instead of 16.♖de1) was probably White's best option.

13.♔b1 ♕f4 14.♖e1

The only move. White must maintain his queen's knight in its central position.

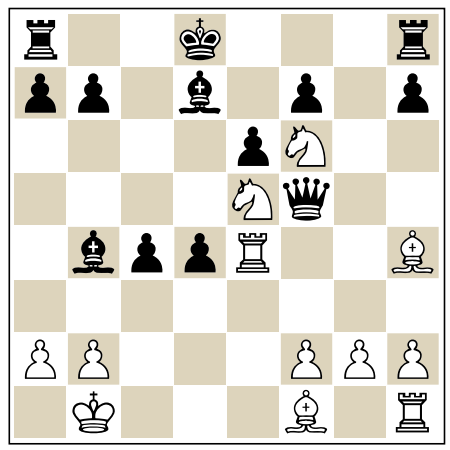
14...♘b4



15.♕xb4!?

Riazantsev plays it like Fine, but the queen sac is less effective here. An important alternative is 15.♕d1. It would be interesting to know what Naiditsch had prepared for this. The immediate 15...c3 leads nowhere after 16.♕c1! c2+ 17.♔a1. The critical move, it seems to me, is 15...♗c6 16.♕xd4 ♕f5! 17.♕xc4, and now Black has several options: 17...♖d8, 17...♗d5, and even 17...b5. Black gets a strong initiative in return for the piece.

15...♗xb4 16.♘xf6+ ♔d8 17.♖e4 ♕f5 18.♘e5



EUGENY SUROV

Alexander Riazantsev is a very interesting player with a sharp and well-considered repertoire, especially as White.

The point of White's play. He is threatening 19.g4, winning the queen.

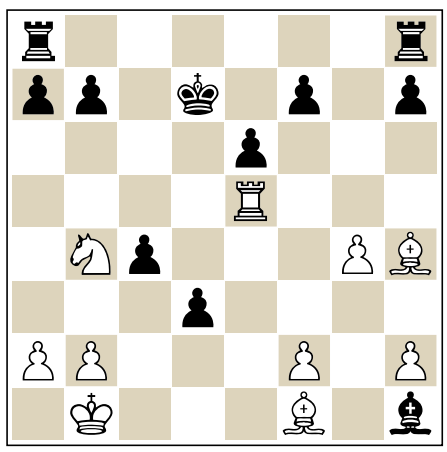
18...♗c6

The best bishop move. Naiditsch was probably still in his preparation. An interesting alternative was 18...♗d6, possibly followed by 19.♘xf7+ ♔c7 20.♗xc4 e5, and now White can force a draw with 21.♘d5+ ♔c6 22.♘f6, as the black king is best advised to go back with 22...♔c7.

19.g4 ♕xe5!

The point of the previous move. There now follows a curious liquidation.

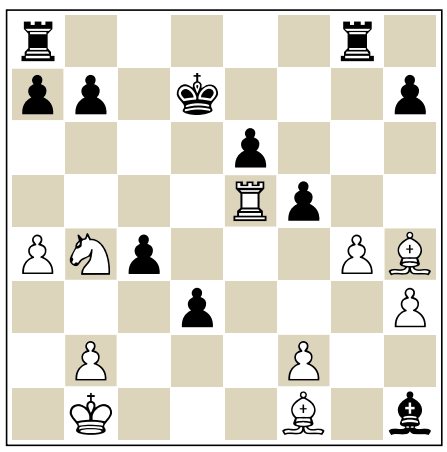
20.♖xe5 ♗xh1 21.♘d5+ ♔d7 22.♘xb4 d3



A short break in the skirmishes and a chance to take stock. White has two pieces for a rook and two pawns, as well as a strong bishop pair. Black's main weakness is on the dark squares, but the pawn duo c4-d3 is very annoying. With these pawns on the board White will find it difficult to start an initiative, with the result that Black will have time to deploy his rooks. I think Black has the slightly better chances.

23.a4 Vacating square a2 for the knight. **23...♖hg8 24.h3 f5!**

Black exploits the poor coordination between the white pieces. It goes without saying that White must prevent the opening of the g-file.



25.♗g3

Inaccurate. Better was 25.♔c1, only to play 26.♗g3 after 25...fxg4.

25...a5

Black fails to exploit this slight slip. The text drives the knight to a better position. A strong move was 25...h5! to open the g-file by force. After 26.gxh5 f4! 27.♗h2 ♗g2 Black has a large advantage. White's best bet is to sacrifice a piece on d3, but even then he remains an exchange down without much in the way of compensation.

26.♘a2 fxg4 27.♘c3

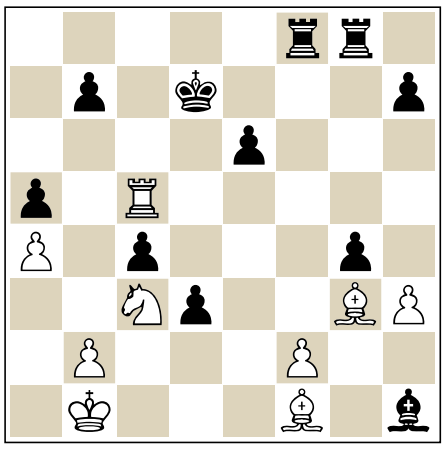
Now White has coordinated his forces, so that he can face the future with some confidence.

27...♖af8

The start of an amazing action. 27...♗f3 was objectively stronger. After 28.♔c1 the position is roughly equal.

28.♖c5

White prepares to eliminate the annoying pawn duo. Black's best bet now was probably 28...♖c8, but that would be tantamount to conceding that his previous move had been a shot in the dark.



28...♖xf2

An amazing rook sacrifice. At the cost of a lot of material Black wants to break open the kingside, hoping that his advanced pawn duo will make itself felt.

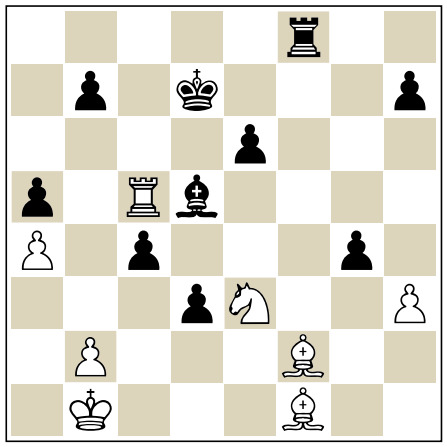
29.♗xf2 ♖f8 30.♘d1

The only move. White has to protect the bishop; otherwise Black would win back his material with interest.

30...♗f3

A better chance was 30...g3 in order to win back at least a piece. With 31.♖xc4! gxf2 32.♖d4+ ♔e7 33.♔c1 White keeps a grip on the proceedings, creating good chances to lead the game into technical territory. Black's drawing chances should not be underestimated, however.

31.♘e3 ♗d5



32.♗e1?

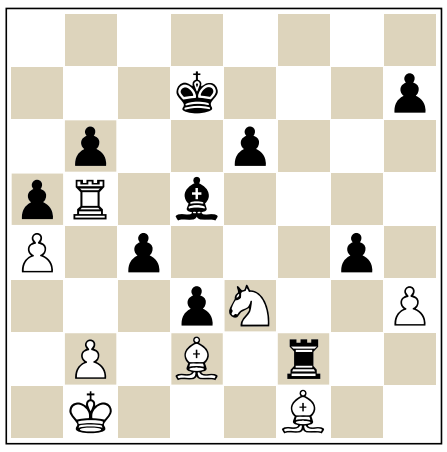
White lets the win slip in time-trouble. With 32.♗g1! he could have neutralized the penetrating enemy rook, after which White's material plus should have decided the outcome. 32...g3 is coolly met by 33.♔c1, after which Black will see his initiative evaporate.

After the text White might even have got into danger.

32...♖f3

With the knight unprotected, this penetrating rook sortie is quite strong.

33.♗d2 b6 34.♖b5 ♖f2



35.♗e1

The bishop has to go back, since 35.♔c1 would give Black too much play. Black was already threatening 36...♖xf1+, followed by promotion of the g-pawn.

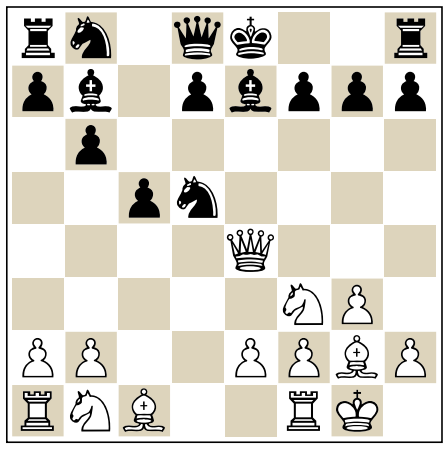
35...♖f3 36.♗d2 ♖f2

Draw. Black could have gone for a win with 36...gxh3. After 37.♗xh3 ♖xh3 38.♘xd5 exd5 39.♖xd5+ ♔c6 40.♖d4 ♔c5 41.♖f4 h5 White will not find it so easy to hold the draw.

In his game against Karjakin, Riazantsev again played a sharp and topical line, and this time it was he who introduced an important novelty.

QI 14.7 – E15
Alexander Riazantsev
Sergey Karjakin
Poikovsky 2010 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.♕c2 ♗b7 6.♗g2 c5 7.d5 exd5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♕e4

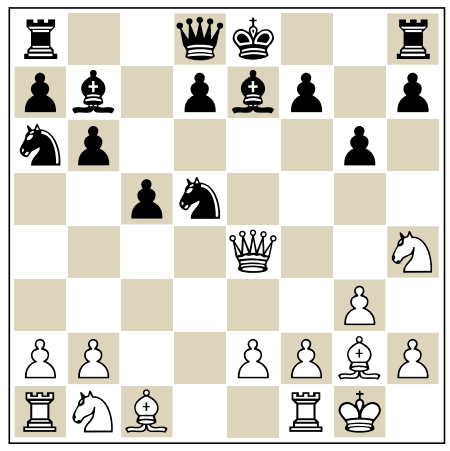


This curious queen move is best known from Shirov's win against Yakovenko, Foros 2008. With the knight on d5 pinned, Black is forced to take immediate measures against the threat of 11.♖d1. The normal continuation is 10.♖d1 at once.

10...♘a6

Yakovenko played 10...♗c6, after which Shirov played 11.♘e5 and got the bishop pair. According to Shirov's comments in New In Chess 2008/5, Black had good prospects of equality. Yakovenko's choice may indeed be better than the text, as the rest of the game will show.

11.♘h4 g6



12.♘f5!

A fantastic novelty, possibly the best one of this year.

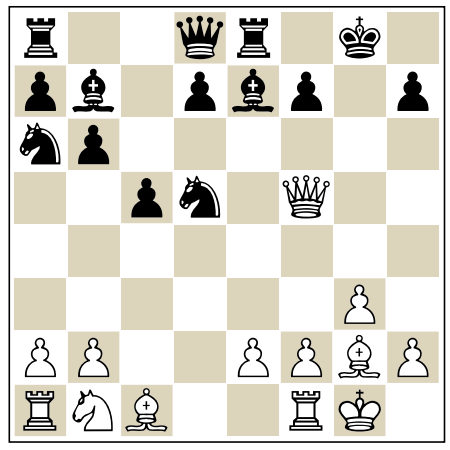
In Radjabov-Leko, Morelia/Linares 2008, and Svidler-Karjakin, Sochi 2008, White played 12.♕e5 f6 13.♕e4, but this manoeuvre failed to frighten Black.

The text is not particularly hard to find with modern computers, and I assume that Radjabov and Svidler had investigated the knight sac during their preparation. But at this stage in the game it is extremely difficult to assess the strength of this sacrifice, even with the help of a strong computer. We will see that Riazantsev had prepared exceptionally thoroughly.

12...gxf5 13.♕e5

The first point. 13...f6 is now met by 14.♕xf5, and White will soon have a decisive attack.

13...0-0 14.♕xf5 ♖e8



15.♘c3

White is in no hurry to win back the piece. After 15.♗xd5 ♗xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘c7, followed by 17...d5, Black would have nothing to complain about. His weakened kingside is fully compensated for by his strong centre.

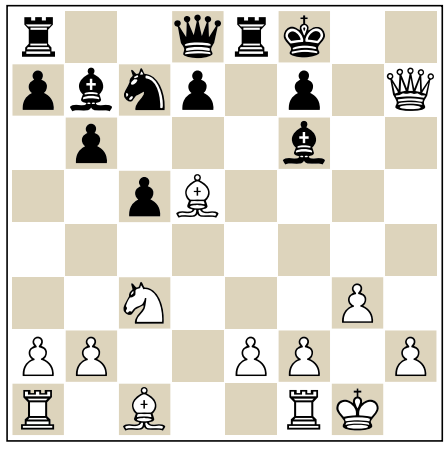
15...♘ac7 16.♗e4

And again, White continues to attack instead of trying to get the piece back.

16...♗f6

Forced. The black king now has an escape hatch on d7.

17.♕xh7+ ♔f8 18.♗xd5



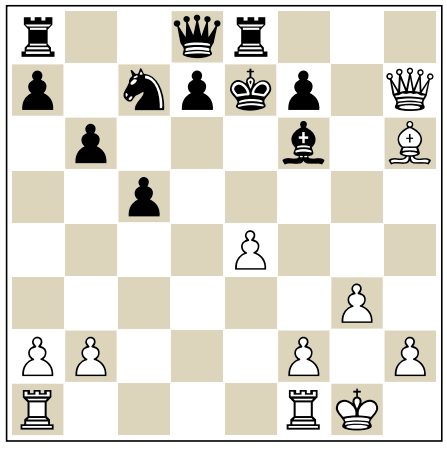
18...♗xd5

Forced again. After 18...♘xd5? 19.♗h6+ ♔e7 20.♕e4+ ♔d6 21.♗f4+ ♘xf4 22.♘b5 Black is suddenly mated.

19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.e4!

Strong play. White keeps the check on h6 in reserve.

20...♘c7 21.♗h6+ ♔e7

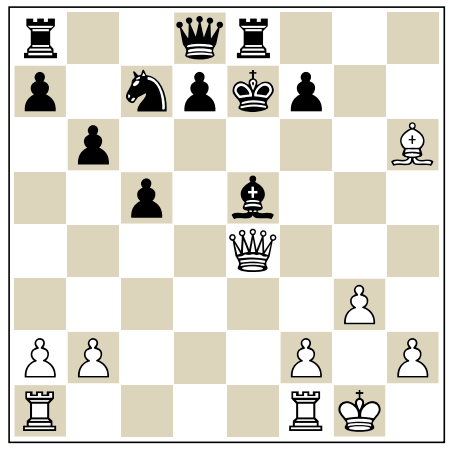


22.e5!

Riazantsev was still playing very fast. Black must take the pawn.

22...♗xe5 23.♕e4!

23.♗g5+ would have been weaker in view of 23...♗f6 24.♖fe1+ ♘e6, and White has to force a draw with 25.♖xe6+ dxe6 26.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 27.♕h4+, with perpetual check.



23...f6

Alternatives were:

A) 23...♔f6. This was the move that Riazantsev should have seen during his preparation. With the surprising 24.♗g5+! White can launch a decisive attack. The main line goes as follows: 24...♔xg5 25.f4+ ♔h6 26.fxe5

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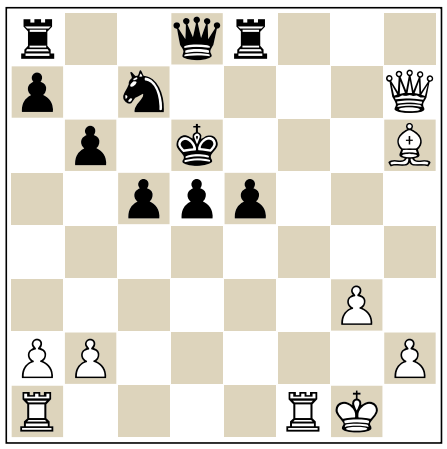
d5 27.♕g4 ♖xe5 28.♖xf7 ♕g5 29.♕h3+ ♕h5 30.♕d7, with devastation. It is said sometimes that modern theory and preparation are carried on as far as move 30. This is often exaggerated, but in this case it's true.

B) 23...d5. An interesting defence. Black returns a piece and a pawn in order to fully consolidate his position. After 24.♕xe5+ ♔d7 25.♕f5+ ♔c6 26.♕xf7 ♕e7 White's best bet is to go for the queen swap to prevent Black from taking over the initiative, after which White's extra pawn will give him the best chances. But Black still has compensation in the form of his strong queenside majority and the position of his king: in the middlegame, the king was exposed in the middle, but in the endgame it's excellently positioned there.

24.f4 d5

The only move. Black forces the queen back to h7.

25.♕h7+ ♔d6 26.fxe5+ fxe5



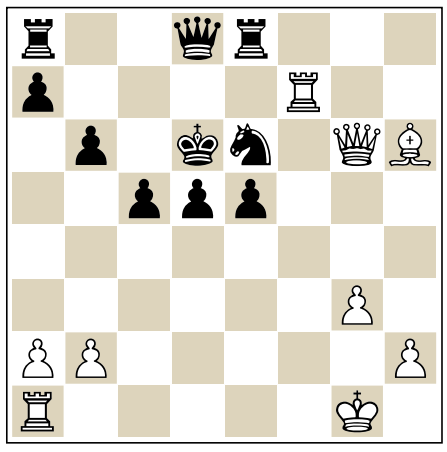
The position has stabilized somewhat. Black is a pawn up and has a mighty pawn centre, but so far they're no good to him, as the position of his king is giving White dangerous attacking chances.

27.♖f7 ♘e6

The best defensive set-up. Attempts to let the king escape to the queenside were doomed: 27...♖c8 28.♖af1 ♔c6 29.♖1f6+ ♔b7 would be followed strongly by 30.♗f8!. The bishop's intervention lends the attack decisive strength.

28.♕g6

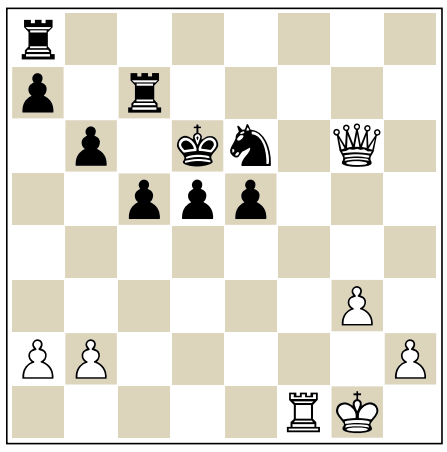
Riazantsev was still playing quite fast, whereas Karjakin had already used a considerable amount of time. After the obvious 28.♖af1 Black would have played 28...♖e7. A rook swap would make Black's defensive job easier.



28...♔c6?

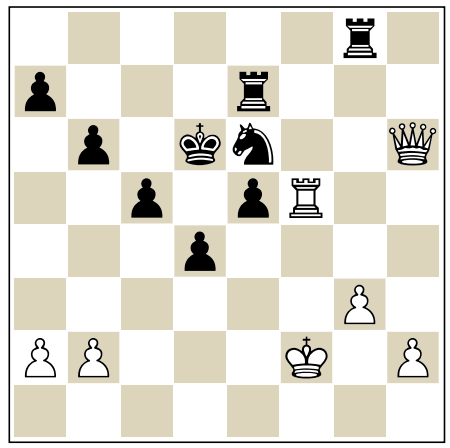
This is probably the decisive error. It is understandable that Black wants to take his king out of the danger zone and to the queenside. The downside of the text, however, is that he will find it difficult to support the knight on e6 sufficiently. Alternatives were:

A) 28...♖e7 29.♗g5 ♖xf7 30.♗xd8 ♖g7 31.♗c7+! ♖xc7 32.♖f1.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

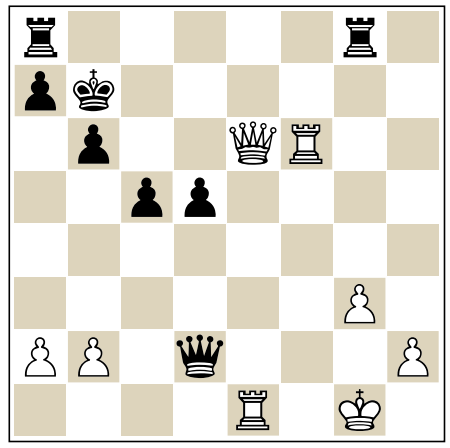
Kavalek assesses this position as slightly better for White in *The Huffington Post*. It is not easy to set the white passed pawns moving, but it seems to me that accurate play should yield White a large advantage. An illustrative line would be 32...♖g7 33.♕h6 ♖ag8 34.♖f6 ♖e7 35.♔f2 d4 36.♖f5!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and Black is in trouble in view of the threat of 37.♕f6, e.g. 36...e4 37.♕f6 e3+ 38.♔e2 or 36...♖g4 37.h3 ♖e4 38.♖f3!, and suddenly the e4 rook is locked in.

B) 28...♖g8 29.♕f5 ♕h4 30.♖e1!, and White keeps control, after which he can start preparing his final offensive. But it's not so easy to see how he should continue after 30...♕xh6 31.♕xe5+ ♔c6 32.♖f6 ♕d2 33.♕xe6+ ♔b7.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The key is a quiet move that proves decisive: 34.♖e3!. After 34...♖ac8 35.♖f7+ ♔a8 White takes a moment to create an escape hatch for the king with 36.h4!. After that he mates the enemy king.

C) 28...♖c8!. The best defence. Black plays an all-round useful move and waits to see how White will continue his attack. Now 29.♖af1 is followed by 29...♖g8 30.♕f5 ♕h4 after all. If White then replies 31.♖e1, he will find himself in Variation B a tempo down. 29.♖e1 won't be any good either after 29...♖c7 30.♖xc7 ♔xc7 31.♖xe5

♕d7 32.♗f4 ♔b7, and Black's consolidation is complete. 29.♖xa7 can also be met by 29...♖c7, with sufficient defensive resources.

All in all we can conclude that this line is just about playable for Black, although it is doubtful whether many black players will risk such an adventure.

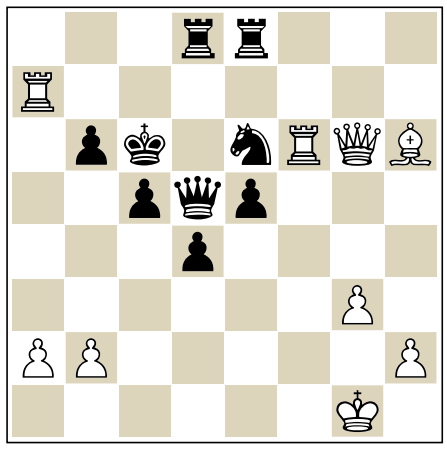
29.♖af1 d4

Vacating square d5 for the queen; but this defensive plan turns out to be insufficient. The same goes for the alternatives.

30.♖1f6 ♕d5 31.♖xa7!

This capture shows that the black defensive line is just so many grains of sand.

31...♖ad8



32.a4

A good move in itself, as it takes away square b5 from the enemy king. But 32.♗f8! would have decided the issue at once – the same power move as in the comment to Black's 27th move. The threat is 33.♗e7, and after 32...♖xf8 33.♖xe6+ ♖d6 34.♖ae7! ♖xe6 35.♖xe6+ ♔d7 36.♖xb6 Black does not have an effective defence against the threat 37.♕g7+.

32...c4

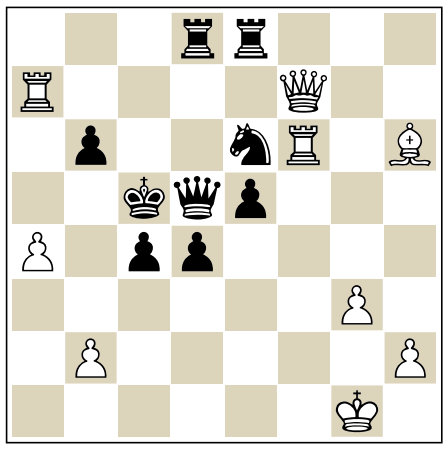
Kavalek correctly indicates that 32...d3 would have made life more difficult for White. After 33.♕f7 ♕d4+ 34.♔g2 ♔d6 White has the quiet 35.♔h3!. The computer confirms that this is White's only winning move. 35...d2 is met by 36.♖d7+ ♖xd7 37.♕xe8 ♕d5 38.♗xd2, and White has a winning advantage.

33.♕f7

And here White irrevocably allows the win to slip through his fingers. 33.♗f8! would still have been a hammer blow. 33...d3 would run into 34.♕f7, with a quick mate, while after 34...♖xf8 35.♖xe6+ ♖d6 36.♕h7 the black king won't escape either. It's a bit strange that Riazantsev twice missed the thematic bishop move, seeing that he used up oceans of time in this part of the game. As a result, a blood-curdling time-trouble battle is now looming.

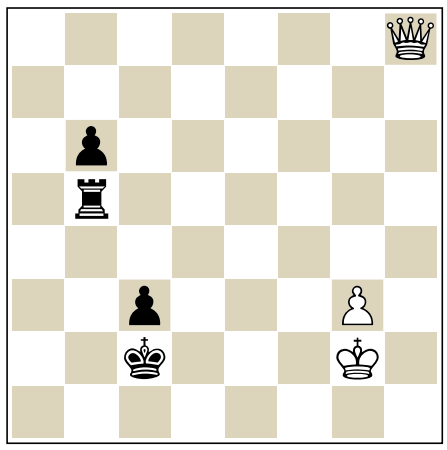
33...♔c5

The king is preparing to find relative safety via square b4. In *Chess Curiosities* Tim Krabbé writes about the phenomenon that games can be won by means of a king march straight through enemy territory. I don't know whether Karjakin knows this book, but his plan is a worthy addition to the material Krabbé had gathered.



34.♗d2

White is continuing his strategy of taking away squares from the black king. An alternative was 34.♖c7+, after which Black would find it hard to come up with an effective defence. Yet he will just manage to save himself, as witness the following long variation: 34...♔b4 35.♖e7 ♖xe7 36.♕xe7+ ♕c5! 37.♖xe6 ♕xe7 38.♖xe7 ♔xa4 39.♖xe5 d3 40.♗d2 ♔b3 41.♖b5+ ♔c2 42.♗f4 d2 43.♗xd2 ♖xd2 44.h4 ♖d1+ 45.♔g2 ♖b1 46.h5 c3 47.h6 ♖xb2 48.h7 ♖xb5 49.h8♕



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now 49...♖b3! is the correct move. White has no winning chances. A fascinating variation.

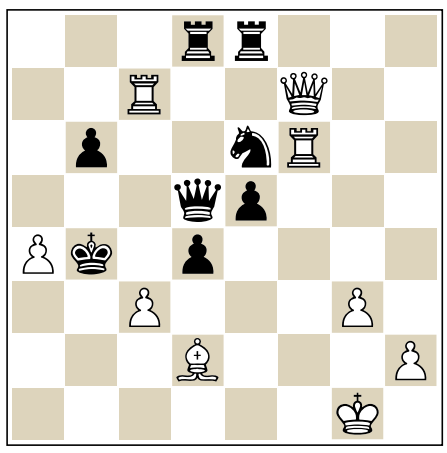
34...c3!

Karjakin reacts very alertly. With the text Black creates room for the king.

35.♖c7+

Immediately 35.bxc3 was better. After 35...♔c4 36.cxd4 ♘xd4 37.♕xd5+ ♔xd5 White's endgame prospects are slightly better. Black has some compensation for the pawn in the form of the strong central positions of the black king and the black knight.

35...♔b4 36.bxc3+



36...♔b3

An understandable move in itself. Karjakin tries to keep the area around his king as closed as possible, but paradoxically enough, 36...dxc3 was slightly stronger. After 37.♗xc3+ the black king has two squares via which to enter enemy territory:

A) 37...♔a3 38.♗b2+! (White has to sacrifice the bishop to be able to continue to harass the black king) 38...♔xb2 39.♖f2+ ♔b3 40.

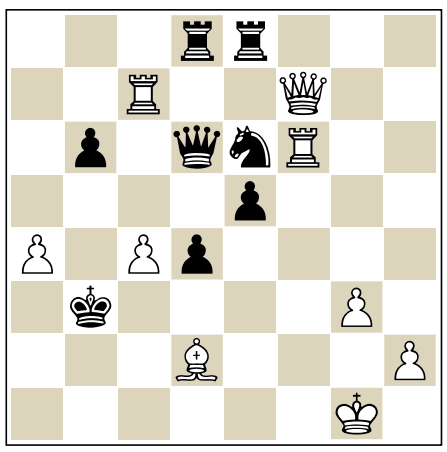
EUGENY SUROV

With a devastating king march Sergey Karjakin, who went on to win the Poikovsky tournament, brought Alexander Riazantsev to his knees.

♖c1 ♕e4 (taking square b1 away from the white rook) 41.♖f3+ ♔b2 42.♖cf1!, and White has created a perpetual-check mechanism that Black will be unable to get away from;

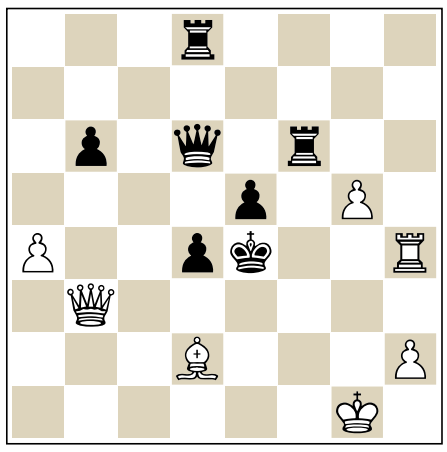
B) 37...♔b3 38.♖xe6! ♖xe6 39.h4, and White has just enough counterplay.

37.c4 ♕d6



38.♖b7?

Already the decisive error. White is aiming for the advance a4-a5, but this plan is too slow. White should have sacrificed an exchange with 38.♖xe6 in order to deploy his queen in the hunt for the black king as quickly as possible. In *Chess Today* Golubev gave the following line, in which White ends up winning: 38...♖xe6 39.♕f1 ♔c2 40.♕c1+ ♔d3 41.♖h7! ♖f6 42.♕d1 ♔xc4 43.♕c2+ ♔d5 44.♕b3+ ♔e4 45.♖h4+ ♔f5 46.g4+ ♔e4 47.g5+,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and the hunt for the black king has been successful. A nice variation. The move 41.♖h7!, with the hidden threat of 42.♖h3, is particularly beautiful. But Black can defend more effectively by recapturing on e6 with the queen. After 38...♕xe6 39.♕f3+ ♔c2 40.♕e2 he can deploy the queen in the defence with 40...♕f5, after which the game could continue as follows: 41.c5 ♖c8! (the only move) 42.♗a5+ ♔b3 43.♕b5+ ♔c2 44.cxb6+ ♖xc7 45.bxc7, and White has the slightly better prospects.

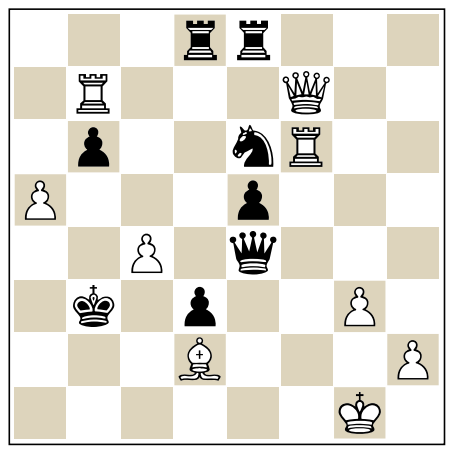
38...d3!

It is becoming clear that Black is taking over the initiative.

39.a5

White continues to realize his doomed plan. Slightly better was 39.♕h7 in order to involve the queen in the defence. But even then Black would be better after 39...♕d4+ 40.♔g2 e4.

39...♕d4+ 40.♔f1 ♕e4 41.♔g1



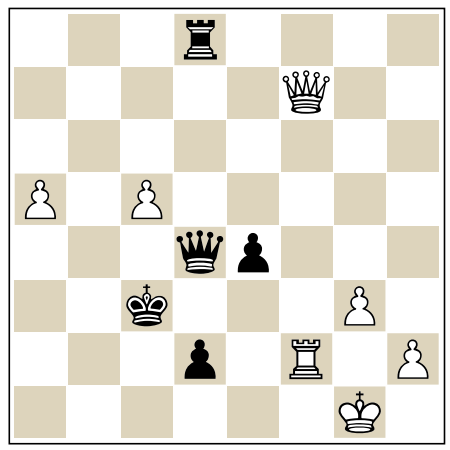
41...♔c2!

The king is going to cause devastation behind the lines.

42.♖xb6 ♔xd2 43.♖bxe6 ♖xe6 44.♕xe6 ♔c2 45.c5 ♕d5

An accurate move. Black prevents a queen check on a2.

46.♕g4 ♕d4+ 47.♖f2+ d2 48.♕f3 e4 49.♕f7 ♔c3



An appropriate final move. The black king has the last word. White resigned.

JAN TIMMAN

JUST CHECKING

NAME: **Vugar Gashimov**

ELO-RATING: **2719**

DATE OF BIRTH: **July 24, 1986**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **Baku, Azerbaijan**

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **Baku, Azerbaijan**

ELNUR, TAG SPORT

What is your favourite colour?
Green, the colour of Nature.

What kind of food makes you happy?
From our national kitchen dolma and lule-kebab, from the Italian kitchen pizza and lasagne.

And what drink?
Green apple and cherry juice.

What was the most interesting book you ever read?
Leyli and Mejnun by Nizami Ganjavi, *Martin Iden* by Jack London.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Scent of a Woman, with Al Pacino.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Jackie Chan and Tom Hanks.

And a favourite actress?
Angelina Jolie, Megan Fox, Charlize Theron.

What music do you like to listen to?
By default our Mugham and instrumental music.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Picasso, Michelangelo and Van Gogh.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Alekhine. I like both his chess and his life-style.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Endgame Strategy by Mikhail Shereshevsky.

What was the most exciting chess game you've ever seen?
Kasparov-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee, 1999.

What is the best chess country in the world?
Desert Island ☺.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Relationships with ladies ☺.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
They sit a lot ☺.

Do you have any superstitions in chess?
Sometimes a pen, sometimes what I wear and sometimes nothing.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A football player.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Angelina Jolie, Megan Fox and Charlize Theron – guess why? ☺

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Yes, to play the pianoforte.

What is your greatest fear?
Snakes.

What would you save from your house if it was on fire?
Myself ☺.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
I would discharge all chess officials that dishonour the game with their dirty dealings.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess World Champion?
Let's ask the director of the movie *2012*.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Chess is the game of Kings.

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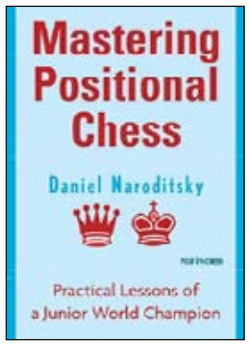

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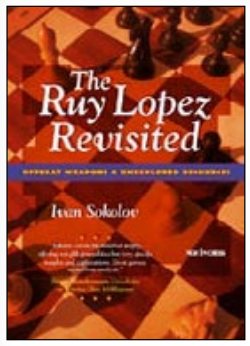

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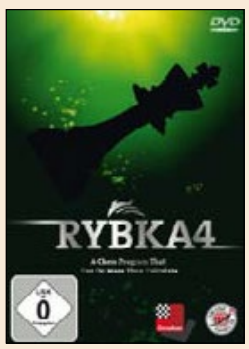

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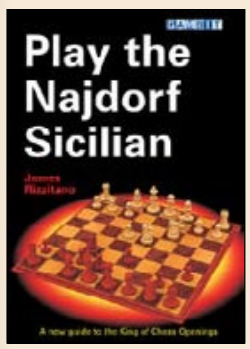

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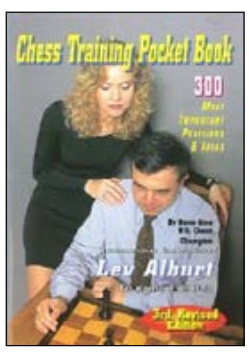

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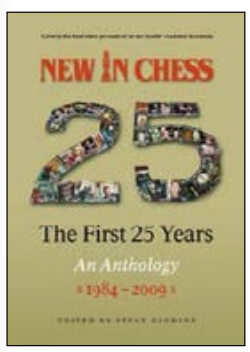

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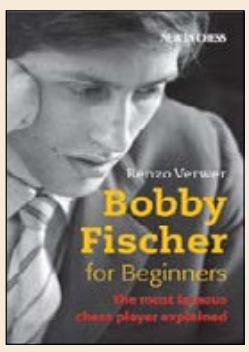

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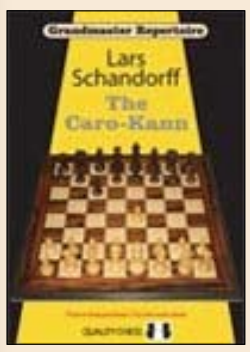

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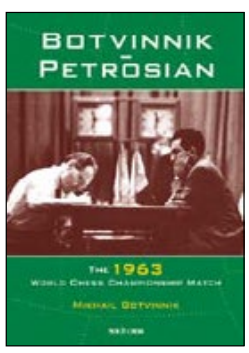

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